

# FINAL REPORT



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Prepared by Team 3b | Social Interaction

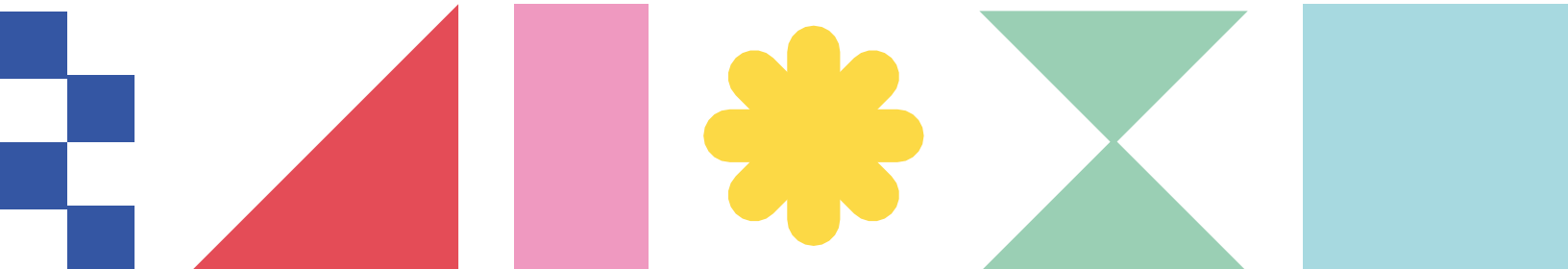
For: Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority (ECA)

30 September 2021

Mask, Meet, Play, Interact

Patricia. Mezu

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# Introduction

## Acknowledgement

Special thanks to the BWG team for all the time spent in meetings, writing emails, research, phone calls, Zoom meetings, more emails, Demo Days, Technical Committee sessions, more emails. I could go on.

Alice has been brilliant at keeping the team on the straight and narrow and showed up amazingly when it was time to put the video together.

Baraka was a somewhat silent, strength behind the scenes, diligently researching, editing reports and strategizing with compiling all of the team's references and data and, of course, finding stakeholders in Abu Dhabi.

With extensive experience in research, Karen spearheaded so much of what the team's main outputs are, conceptualizing Adventures on Wheels and building the fabric of the proposal for the WED Alliance for Children and Families.

Pablo faithfully attending leadership meetings at extremely odd hours of the morning and conceptualized the need for a fund which evolved into the Alliance for Children and Families. Not to forget his great idea for the tiered system of outputs.

Suha always providing invaluable local context and up-to-date relevant, evidence-informed data about the emirate of Abu Dhabi. Also, tirelessly interviewing stakeholders and stepping in, to partner with Alice, to save the day with the production of the video for the final Demo Day.

Tushita from Strategy Connect has been an invaluable source, showing up as the efficient project manager that she is.

Shukran!

Patricia Mezu



## Glossary of Terms

**Abu Dhabi** refers to the Emirate of Abu Dhabi unless otherwise specified

**Children 0-8 years/Child** includes children of determination from conception to 8 years of age

**Children of Determination.** The following list describes the categories of disability recognized as requiring additional or different approaches within schools operated by the Abu Dhabi Education Council.

- Intellectual Disability.
- Specific Learning Disability.
- Emotional and Behavioral Disorder.
- Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- Speech and Language Disorder.
- Physical and Health-related Disabilities.
- Visually Impairment.
- Hearing Impairment.
- Multiple Disabilities.

**ECD** Early Childhood Development

**ECEC** Early Childhood Education and Care

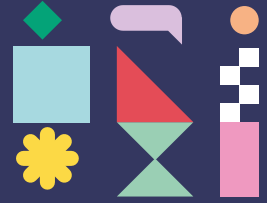
**ECEC institutions** (in the act, preschools) are educational institutions.

**KPI** Key Performance Indicators

**Preschool Education** is a system of knowledge, skills, experience and behavioral norms which create the prerequisites for succeeding in everyday life and at school.



# SECTION 1



## Overview Summary

**Social interaction - the non-negotiable component of social development and overall well-being in children 0-8 years.**

### TEAM 3b's Brief and Theme

- Improve Social Interaction outcomes in Abu Dhabi and globally enabling 'disruptive innovation' and 'generating actionable recommendations' within the theme.
- Identify key topics relevant to social interaction while engaging with relevant identified stakeholders.
- Devise aspirational approaches and outputs to develop and extend the ambit of social interaction to make sure that children from 0-8 years are future-ready and to create a nurturing environment for children's socio-emotional development

### Vision

Every child<sup>1</sup> in the UAE, between 0-8 years, will flourish when provided with opportunities to interact socially, within safe and secure environments that are based on nurturing and responsive care and education.

### Definitions and Why Social Interaction is Pivotal for the Development of Children 0-8 Years in Abu Dhabi

Young children experience the world as an environment of relationships. These relationships affect, virtually all aspects of their development. Therefore, **social interaction** is key to the development of children. Healthy development necessarily depends on the quality and reliability of a young person's relationship with the important people in her/his life. For example, parents, siblings, caregivers, extended family, peers, educators, neighbors.

"The quality and stability of a child's **human relationships in the early years** lays the foundation for a wide range of later developmental outcomes that really matter - self-confidence, and sound mental health, motivation to learn, achievement in school and later life, the ability to control aggressive impulses

<sup>1</sup> This is an inclusive term and necessarily embraces children of determination.

and resolve conflict, knowing the difference between right and wrong, having the capacity to develop and sustain friendships<sup>201</sup>.”

**Children of determination**, sometimes need targeted teaching when it comes to developing social skills and building relationships through social interaction. For example, students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) often need specific teaching to learn *how* to initiate interactions, share, and take turns.

Relationships engage children within their community in a manner that will eventually help them define who they are, what they can become and how and why they are important and connected to other people<sup>201</sup>.

“**Social interactions** are how we act and react to those around us. Social interactions form the basis of any relationship between two or more people, whether you are 2 or 102. For young children, social interactions include physical movements (body language), conversation, playing together, sharing, cooperating, showing empathy, inquiry, resilience, creativity, problem-solving, and the ability to manage conflicts, stress and the expectations of the environment.” | Dr. Karen Kelly

### Peekaboo Can Change the World | TED Talk by a Seven-Year-Old

Please click here for a - [video clip](#) that explains the essence of social interaction in young children. It elucidates social interaction in terms of a concept popularly known as ‘**serve and return**’.

Child-adult relationships that are **responsive and attentive** - with lots of back-and-forth **interactions build a strong foundation in a child’s brain for all future learning and development**. This is called “serve and return,” and it takes two to play!

Note the reaction of the child when he interacts with his father in two different scenarios. One in which the father is fully attentive and engaged. The other in which the father is inattentive and distracted.

“How children act and react to others around them, constitutes social interaction. This interaction can take different forms of verbal language (speech) and non-verbal language (body language). It includes playing together, holding conversations, sharing things/ideas, cooperating, and much more. Social interaction is intended to happen in a safe and responsive environment, as healthy social interaction has a critical impact on a child’s development - language, emotional, physical, learning, in addition to self-esteem, problem-solving, creativity, and more”. | Dr. Suha Mohammed Al Hassan

In simple terms social interaction is about human connection. It’s about relationships. Ms. Rita Pierson in her TED Talk ‘*Every Kid Needs a Champion*’ says it well:

“We know why kids don’t learn. It’s either poverty, low attendance, negative peer influences... We know why. But one of the things that we never discuss, or we rarely discuss is the **value and importance of human connection – Relationships....**”.

For years, I watched my mother take the time at recess to review, go on home visits in the afternoon, buy combs and brushes and peanut butter and crackers to put in her desk drawer for kids that needed to eat...

And when my mama died two years ago at 92, there were so many former students at her funeral, it brought tears to my eyes, not because she was gone, but because she left a **legacy of relationships** that could never disappear”.

Social Interaction - “verbal and non-verbal ways in which the exchange of ideas are communicated between parties to the satisfaction of all involved”. | Alice Cahn

## Attributes of Social Interaction

- “Humans are hardwired for social interaction.
- Social interaction starts long before verbal and physical development (eye gaze, smiles, arch back).
- Social interaction establishes both a child and a parent’s well-being” | Pablo Stansbery

“Social interaction is a dynamic, changing sequence of social actions between individuals (or groups) who modify their actions and reactions due to the actions by their interaction partner(s)”.

## United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 4

Social interaction is an **integral part of educating** children between 0-8 years. SGD 4.2.1 specifically refers to **Psychosocial well-being**: emotional skills, social skills, internalizing behavior, and externalizing behavior.

### Rationale

Early childhood development (ECD) sets the stage for **life-long thriving**. Investing in ECD is one of the most critical and cost-effective investments a country can make to improve adult health, education and productivity in order to build human capital and promote sustainable development. ECD is equity from the start and provides a good **indication of national development**. Efforts to improve ECD can bring about **human, social and economic improvements for both individuals and societies**.



## Local Context - Social Interaction

The aim for Team 3b is to impact the social interaction skills and development of children 0-8 years within the Emirate of Abu Dhabi ('AD') United Arab Emirates ('UAE'). Taking the model from Abu Dhabi; to the UAE; the Arabian Gulf region and beyond.

Abu Dhabi (city) is the seat of the President of the United Arab Emirates and the seat of the UAE government.

According to the Abu Dhabi Statistics Centre the estimated population of the Emirate, mid-2016, was 2,908,173 (comprising 1,857,618 males and 1,050,555 females). 551,535 were UAE nationals and 2,356,638 were expatriates. The average annual population growth rate for the years from 2010 to 2016 was 5.6 per cent.

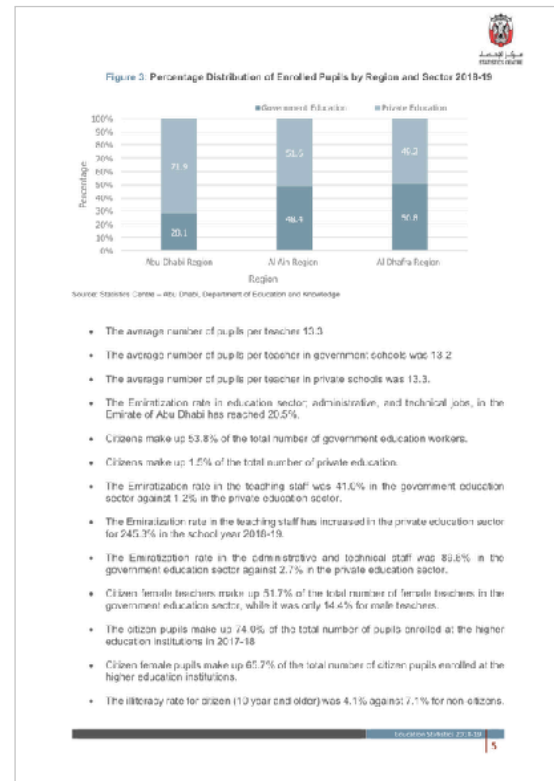
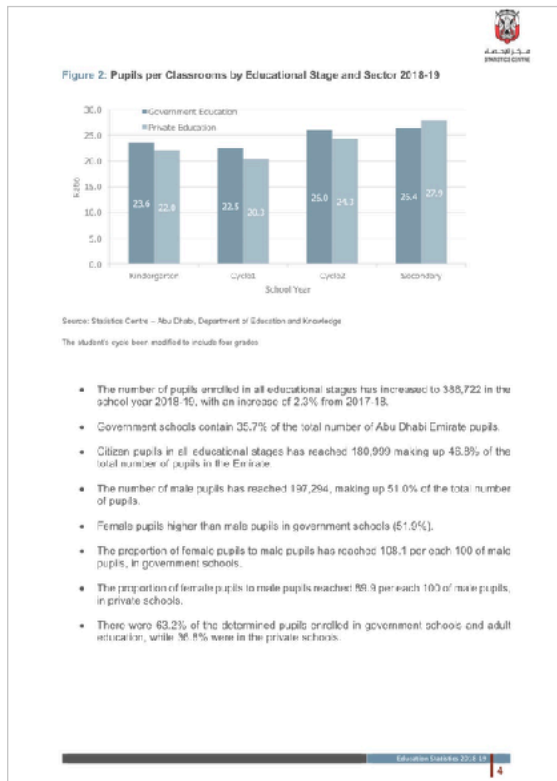
The Emirate of Abu Dhabi lies on the coast of the Arabian Gulf and is bordered by Sultanate of Oman to the east, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the south and the west and the emirate of Dubai to the northeast.

The three main regions of the Abu Dhabi emirate are:

- The city of Abu Dhabi
- Al Ain in the east
- Al Dhafra (earlier known as Al Gharbia) in the west



Social development in Abu Dhabi represents a significant objective and driving motivation behind policies and initiatives pursued by Abu Dhabi government. Key elements of the Emirate's vision for the social development describe a society characterized by the provision of world-class healthcare, education and other services that lead to a safe and secure society and the preservation of cultural heritage of Abu Dhabi, where individuals are valued and their unique skills and contributions are ethically leveraged toward achieving a better quality of life for all.



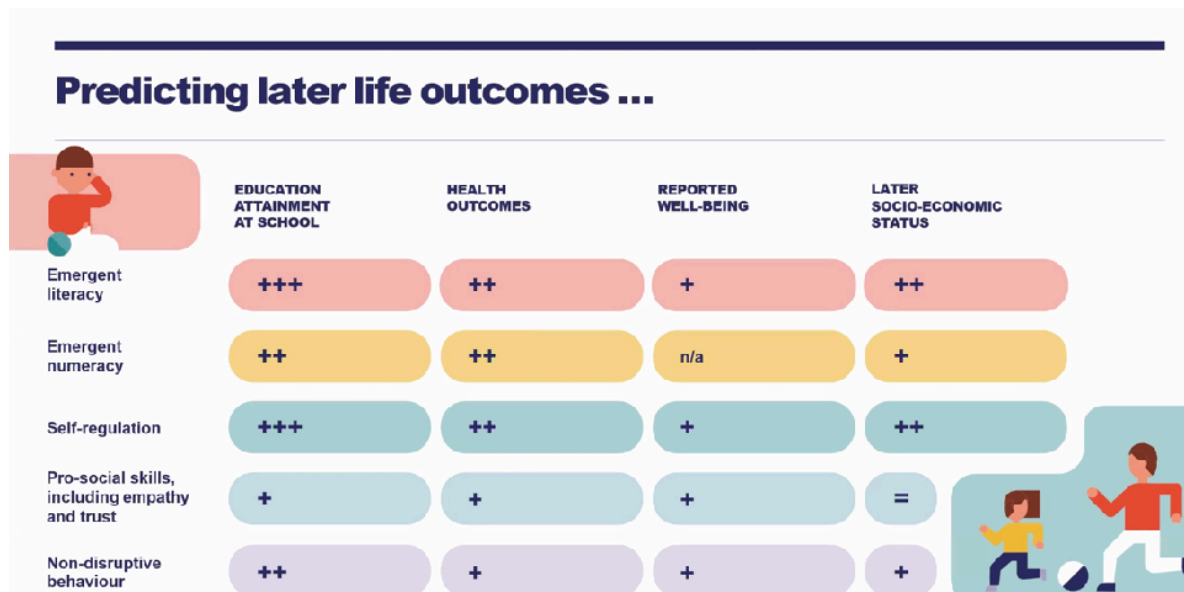
In the UAE, the compulsory school age is six.

[Click here to view a 3-minute time lapse of the city of Abu Dhabi](#)





## Global Context - Social Interaction



Children's learning, development and wellbeing are directly influenced by their daily interaction with other children, adults, their families and the environment. This is known as 'process quality'.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development ('OECD')<sup>115</sup> espoused a tree of policies that support **meaningful interactions** in early childhood education and care ('ECCE'). For Abu Dhabi to foster and enhance quality interactions in children's daily experiences, instrumental systems need to be in place. There is scope for ADEK as a regulatory inspector of nurseries, to add social interaction/social development/adult-child interactions/child-child interaction to the criteria for such inspections. These inspections should follow through to the kindergarten and lower primary years (KG1/2 - grade 3).

Standards should demonstrate that they are developmentally appropriate, considering a full range of high-quality measures including **social and emotional development, physical development, language, literacy, communication, thinking and cognitive skills**.

For enabling success, five pivotal policies have been isolated by OECD, linked to:

1. Curriculum and pedagogy
2. Workforce development
3. Quality standards, governance and financing
4. Monitoring and data
5. Family and community engagement



## 1. Curriculum and Pedagogy

- Curriculum frameworks set out principles, standards, guidelines and approaches that can be used by educators to foster children's development, learning and wellbeing. Both curriculum and pedagogy are important enablers when it comes to driving process quality. For effective interactions it is essential for this factor to be part of teacher training and professional development.

**Recommendation:** In addition to the normal (academic) areas within curricula frameworks, in Abu Dhabi, social interaction should be a mandatory addition. Additionally, when ADEK inspects nurseries, it is recommended that social interaction be added as a criterion for inspection.

## 2. Workforce Development

- Here the spotlight is on **teacher training and professional development** within Abu Dhabi. Presently there is not one coherent system for training teachers. This is understandable in view of the number of schools offering up to 20 different curricula. However, to enable and sustain **high standards** there is scope for ECA to mandate a system in which all initial training and professional development in early education (for teachers and leaders) should have full capacity to build **high quality interactions** with children and parents and between children themselves.

## 3. Quality Standards, Governance and Financing

- Governance, standards and funding** are core components of structural quality. They are the bedrock of all other policies that support quality child development, learning and wellbeing (social interaction being a major part of wellbeing). The funding element is unique in Abu Dhabi because most preschools and nurseries are private. However, governance and standards are still relevant. **Governance** defines the main authority in charge of the early education settings - ADEK and Ministry of Education ('MOE'). **Minimum standards** refer, for example, to physical space, resources and materials used in the classroom as well as teacher: child ratios. **Cultural context and Emirati heritage** is an important factor to consider when dealing with any recommendations.

## 4. Monitoring and Data

- Monitoring** and the development of **datasets** are closely linked to 1 and 2 above - **curriculum and pedagogy** and **workforce development**.
- They all constitute a foundation for best practices in process quality. For example, monitoring the implementation of curricula will provide ADEK with better knowledge on how well it's being used by staff. Monitoring could also determine the efficacy of work being done in nurseries by the workforce. Monitoring social interaction is key for **process quality**.

## 5. Family and Community Engagement

- This is particularly important when considering the ecosystem of children 0-8 years in Abu Dhabi. These policies also work in tandem with 1 and 2 above - **curriculum and pedagogy** and **workforce development**.
- Going forwards it will be pivotal for the role of families to continue to be in the spotlight. For example, nurseries-to-families interactions; nurseries-to-children interactions. ECA already has key initiatives in place such as the *Parent-Friendly Label Initiative*.

In view of the high percentage of preschool-aged children (85%) in Abu Dhabi, who have no access to early childhood education, the development of these five policies by relevant government agencies will be key for developing social interaction.

## Research and Exploration Methods Utilized by Team 3b

1. Interviews - general population
2. Interviews - high level experts
3. Surveys - parents and families
4. Surveys - education community
5. Consistent ideation, following an iterative process
6. Email communication with early childhood, health care and research community
7. Internet/web - based searches
8. Desk review of local, national, and global research
9. Thematic Reviews



## Problems Identified

There were somewhat consistent and notable challenges that Team 3b unearthed when interviewing and conducting conversations with the chosen categories of stakeholders within Abu Dhabi.

The team identified opportunities for children between the ages of 0-8 years to develop prosocial skills within the daily routines of families and caregivers. As such, all outputs were created specifically in response to these problems. It is important to note that the team interviewed and surveyed on a small section of the population. Therefore, any statements from stakeholders must be viewed considering this.



**Insufficient paid family leave** for new parents. This limits opportunities for bonding and social interaction with their child/ren. Some parents understood about the importance of social interaction. However, work-life balance dilemma was their reality and seen to be a problem.

*"After I had my baby there was not enough time for me to spend with him as I had to return to work. I was very concerned about this as I had no reliable quality childcare. There are no agencies or entities for good quality experts to assist after birth"*

*"It would be great if new mothers could work from home and if maternity leave was up to one year or at least six months".*

*"Extended paid maternity leave would help me interact better with my child".*

*"At the end of every day, I spend time with my three daughters. I hug them and talk to them and review their day. It is our time as a family to connect in addition to mealtimes".*

*"The emphasis on social interaction and relationships in the home is very, very important. It is awesome that this work is taking place in this country".*

*"I had to quit my job during my first pregnancy as work was stressful and there was no support within the private sector, for expectant mums. My pregnancy was taken against me. Working from home would have helped. Now my experience makes me reluctant to have more children as there is no quality support".*

*"It would be helpful for developing children if more private companies had corporate childcare".*

*"I love this initiative; the WED Movement is filling a much-needed gap".*

**Emirati mothers**



**Role of the father** in raising children, particularly when there is a newborn or when children are young.

*“As a father I am intentional when talking to my children, explaining that the future will be different, therefore they have to keep up with the modern age”.*

*“I make sure I communicate and focus on our culture for all my children (boys and girls) and take on board the culture and the new areas when modelling fatherhood”.*

*“I am now including my husband more in the decision-making when it comes to parenting. I have become more assertive. Now we are on the same page”.*

*“As an expectant mum I am planning to communicate and interact with my baby in Arabic. This has been a stressful pregnancy and I find it difficult to connect with my baby as I am in a high stress job. I do talk to my baby sometimes, but I don’t feel a connection. I try to involve my husband”.*

**Emirati fathers and mothers**



**Limited support from the medical community**, particularly in public hospitals, for mothers-to-be. Adequate support will bring a better understanding and could raise awareness within families of social interaction, even before a child is born.

*“I am the first of all my friends to become pregnant. I looked for information online, joined a WhatsApp group and I read books for information. I have gestational diabetes and getting information from the public hospital to support me has been difficult. Private hospitals in Abu Dhabi are better than public.”*

*“It would be good if there was good childcare support for mums at home from the beginning, for example a coach nurse. Supporting moms at home so that they know what to expect”.*

*“When I first became pregnant, a consolidated list of hospitals did not exist in Abu Dhabi. There was insufficient information on how to communicate with my unborn baby and also about communication after the birth”.*

*“I had to quit my job during my first pregnancy as work was stressful and there was no support within the private sector, for expectant mums. My pregnancy was taken against me. Working from home would have helped. Now my experience makes me reluctant to have more children as there is no quality support”.*

**Emirati mothers**



Organized and reliable, informed, **multi-generational care** would be nice to have for new mothers.

*"I would love to live in a multi-generational home instead of relying on a house worker to be with my child".*

*"For my first pregnancy, my mum is of a different generation and had different expectations, so I could not always rely on her to help".*

**Emirati mothers**



**Overwhelming amount of unvetted resources** and information on the internet. This led to a sense of frustration by parents, sometimes leading to a sense of not knowing exactly how to interact socially with their child/ren.

*"During my first pregnancy, I struggled a lot with finding reliable and good information to support me, particularly in Arabic. An app or online platform was needed, customized for expectant mums, especially in the 2nd and 3rd trimesters".*

*"I am the first of all my friends to become pregnant. I looked for information online, joined a WhatsApp group and I read books for information. I have gestational diabetes and getting information from the public hospital to support me has been difficult".*

*"When my son was younger it was very difficult for me to access information locally. I have a child of determination and it was very frustrating for me as I did not know how to handle things. Finally, I received support from the school"*

**Emirati mothers, expat mother**



**Insufficient affordable, high-quality childcare** that offers social interaction opportunities. During interviews, mothers who were home schoolers expressed that they had a good idea in terms of the value of social interaction and other holistic measures for teaching children. Concern was raised about the academic approach and rote learning in nurseries and schools for children.

*“My daughter is seven going on eighteen. I home school my daughter because I became frustrated with the overly academic curriculum in the school, without taking into consideration the holistic development of children”.*

*“In the last 24 hours spending time with my 7-year-old, I have made breakfast and shared a meal (pancakes); taken time for Quran citation; sung fun songs; had intentional conversations about the names of the Muslim calendar; read stories; worked with maths; drawn pictures and had free play. It is important for me to plan our days carefully and interact socially”.*

*“I have created a social, safe group for my daughter and often invite a few children in my community to come over for structured play times - play dough, lego, puzzles, Jenga, bicycles. No gaming”.*

*“In my personal opinion I will not use technology with my baby from the get-go. In the first year there will be no TV, no phones, no apps etc. After one year it will be difficult to control if he visits his grandparents. Technology can be over stimulating”.*

**Expatriate mothers**



**Untrained and unqualified domestic houseworkers** provide the majority of childcare for 0-4. This was a problem expressed repeatedly by mothers and some educators.

*"My message to any young parents is - see your children as a real investment. I stayed at home with my children for three years. It is important to commit to your children and spend time with them and build a strong foundation; not to hand them over to a nanny". My comment and advice has been influenced by the lockdown.*

*"I am nervous about leaving my new-born at home with an un-trained nanny. I plan to install a camera and keep an eye on what is happening when I return to work. My baby will only be three months at this time.*

*"Nannies should spend more time looking after the household and provide parents with time to spend with their children".*

*"I choose not to have a full-time helper and provide my children with chores so they know how to look after themselves".*

**Emirati mother, expat mother, nursery owner**



Significant **discrepancy about the use of digital games and apps** as a part of children's activities (parents 28%; education administrators 13%)<sup>1</sup>. Additionally, however, parents interviewed gave feedback about screen-time.

*"In my personal opinion I will not use technology with my baby from the get-go. In the first year there will be not TV, no phones, no apps etc. After one year it will be difficult to control if he visits his grandparents. Technology can be over stimulating".*

*"Occasionally I allow my children to use the iPad, but not very often. My children are 15, 12 and 7 years".*

*"Online experiences should be safer for children"*

*"I would say not give them technology like an iPad in the class and to use less technology. Children have become zombies and dependent on technology".*

*"Children should be kept away from gadgets and exposed to more open play".*

*"I play with a group of friends in my compound we play outside and also build puzzles, play with board games and cook. We do not use an iPad too much".*

*We face many challenges during this period, including that most children have been socially affected during the pandemic period, which has significantly affected their skills socially, linguistically, and psychologically, in which it increased the use of tablets by children.*

**Emirati mother, expat mother, CACHE trainer, teachers, child**

<sup>2</sup> Team 3b Educators Survey | Abu Dhabi April 2021





**Lack of accessible neighborhood “green”** play spaces, minimizing opportunities for play and social interaction between children in their communities. In addition, educators voiced the importance of additional time for play. Purposeful play is a tool for developing social interaction. Families interviewed, expressed the importance of play and interaction at home.

*“I would value community spaces to share best practices in early childhood education with my neighbours”.*

*“In my community, just out of Abu Dhabi, there are no areas for the children to meet and play. This would help to develop interaction”.*

*As a family at home, we tell stories at bedtime to communicate with our children and talk about feelings, for example if our son had a bad dream. We also use digital games, share jokes, dancing and role play. We communicate in Arabic and English”.*

*“Children should have more opportunities and chances to role play, to have a voice and make friends. Outdoor play in nature is important”.*

*“It has been a very tough year because of the pandemic that affects my students socially and psychologically”.*

**Emirati father and mothers, teachers, nursery director**





**Conflicting and mixed messages** amongst educators, about the value of social interaction in 0-8 educational settings. In addition, limited opportunities in primary grades for **play-based learning and social interaction**.

*"We have observed in some settings that very young children are sitting at tables completing work sheets and have no opportunity to enquire, investigate and explore or interact with their peers".*

*"Social interactions were drastically reduced and we had several children of determination who were having their sessions online, which was not very successful".*

*"Please please add more trainings for teachers that involve putting the child's social skills and personality development before teaching them to read and write".*

*"More focus should be on teachers interacting with kids rather than focusing on a daily results-based learning".*

*"Activities that focus on increasing the child's confidence, his ability to form friendships, and his good knowledge of the outside world will build a healthy and successful personality for himself and his community".*

*"Play has a vital part on moulding children. So at least they should engage in play and social interaction. More outdoor activities and games".*

*"We need to ADD MORE PLAYING TIME TO THE CURRICULUM".*

*"Play is the work of a child! All early educators must offer interesting forms of play and inculcate fair play habits in young children. I limit two children to one play area, so this helps to maintain their social distancing. I change the play options in each area everyday, so the children remain interested and excited to come to the nursery".*

**Kindergarten and grades 1-3 teachers, academic supervisors,  
teachers of children of determination.**





**The Impact of COVID-19** on the development of social interaction skills in children 0-8 years has been significant, globally. Educators in Abu Dhabi voiced concerns about what they observed when children returned to school in the 2020/2021 academic year.

*“Social interactions were drastically reduced and we had several children of determination who were having their sessions online, which was not very successful”.*

*“In light of the Corona pandemic, educational institutions are the best place to learn skills and play properly”.*

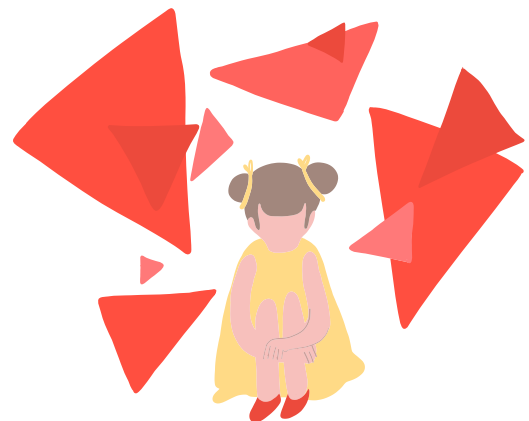
*“When will children be able to interact with their friends? because of Corona, there are many boundaries between children and not giving them the freedom to play”.*

*“The Pandemic experience I have in social interaction has been tricky for me since am handling the 3 to 4 years its has not been easy for the children to adjust to the situation but i have tried my best to do the distancing and arranging each child's resources as per ADEK instruction”.*

*“I hope that we will work together for the development of the child in the UAE and make sure to address the negative aspects that have affected children during the Corona pandemic period. Please accept my sincere thanks and respect”.*

*“Due to the social distancing norms, it has been a little challenging to maintain social interactions while keeping the children physically apart. However, I have successfully developed their social skills, despite the restrictions during play. I am happy to report that I have a few children of determination in my class who started with zero social skills, but now they have progressed a lot in this area Alhamdulillah”!*

**Teachers in nurseries, kindergarten, grades 1-3**



12	Lack of standard or national/emirate-wide curriculum model for nurseries and preschools that supports play-based learning and social interaction.
13	Lack of developmentally appropriate ('DAP')/early childhood development ('ECD') protocols for inspectors of nurseries, KGs, and primary grades, with respect to social skills development.
14	Lack of parent and community awareness of the depth and breadth of ECA resources and support.
15	Lack of regular developmental milestone screenings in nurseries and/or during well-child checkups.
16	Lack of media messaging about the value of social interaction as a critical element of children's wellbeing.
17	Lack of local and national funding streams for early childhood program development, nurseries, and professional/staff development
18	Lack of <b>cross-disciplinary communication and partnerships</b> between health, education, and related business sectors.
19	Significant percentage (42%) of educators surveyed believed that studying and homework should be part of 0-8 children's daily activity; compared to 21% of educational administrators surveyed.
20	Parents could spend more time playing with their children. Educators surveyed in Abu Dhabi (36%) believed that parents spend less than 30 min a day playing with their child. Educators in Al Ain (47%) and Al Dhafra (59%) believed parent-child play to be approximately one hour a day.

## Principal Solutions | Outputs<sup>3</sup>

### Year One | Bronze - Recommendations

#### Promotion & Practice: Shout it from the Rooftops, WED Works Now

- Visibly and consistently promote expert educators, businesses, families and policymakers engaged in productive, replicable, effective social interaction activities.

<sup>3</sup> Contributor: Alice Cahn

## Years Two-Three | Silver - Recommendations

**Promotion & Practice:** Unsettle Existing Rote Teaching and Learning and family practices

- Develop and implement a Family Playgroup model for all children and families (include children of determination and their families) to interact socially in urban and rural/regional areas (provide incentives for participation). The concept may be adapted in the classroom for consistent and supported practice.
- Produce a reliable and quality-driven source for educators to access. Focused on social skills development, regularly, in the form of a podcast/Instagram live/webinars/Clubhouse talks etc. Use existing thought leaders in the technical committee and beyond.

## Years Two-Five | Gold - Output

**Proposals, Products and Programs:**

The Future is Mobile x 2 | Launch and promote:

- App and web-tool initiatives targeted to key constituencies (educators, businesses, families and policymakers that encourage social interaction.
- With Adventures on Wheels (team's output), develop and launch a fleet of buses, vans and other vehicles that, inspired by beloved bookmobiles of years past, encourage social interaction through hi-touch and hi-tech content, experts, excitement and support for everyone within WED's purview.

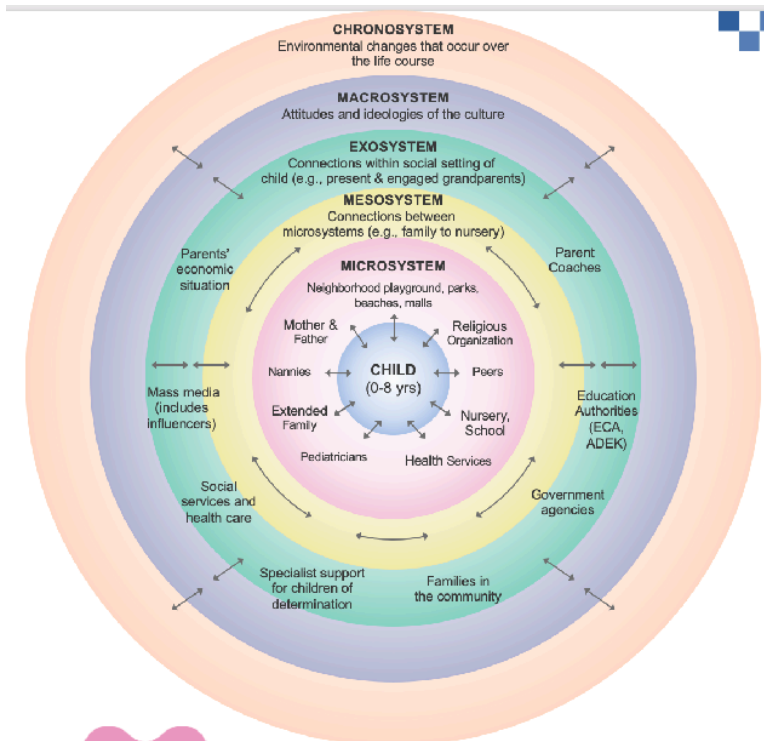
## Years Five-Ten | Platinum - Output

**Proposals and Proof: Research, Promote, Repeat**

- Show the world that policymakers, businesses, and educators can collaborate by developing a consistent set of funds and guidelines that support children in their childhood – WED Alliance for Children and Families (team's output)
- Establish and support research on social interaction's impact, and on engagement and efficacy of proposed programmatic initiatives.
- Promote and share research processes and results globally.
- Develop, and globally host, unique 'WED Research and Practice' conferences.
- Consistently participate in, and partner with, global industry conferences across education, entertainment, business and government.

## Primary Stakeholders Identified

1. Children: 0-8 years
2. Mothers
3. Fathers and male role models
4. Grandparents
5. Extended family



**Bronfenbrenner:** Adapted by Team 3b for Abu Dhabi relating to Social Interaction in children 0-8years.

*“In order to develop normally, a child requires progressively more complex joint activity with one or more adults, who have an irrational emotional relationship with the child. Somebody’s got to be crazy about that kid. That’s number one. First, last and always”.*

6. Youth: 15-25 years
7. Care givers and nannies
8. Educators (teachers and leaders within early childhood education (‘ECE’)
9. Employers
10. Administrators and nursery leaders and owners
11. Media
12. Health Care Providers (pediatricians, nurses, doctors, child psychologists)
13. Government agencies - ADEK, Ministry of Education
14. International ECD representatives
15. ECA staff

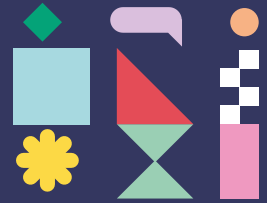


## Potential Partners

1. Abu Dhabi Transport 'Mawaqif
2. Abu Dhabi Department of Municipalities and Transport (DMT).
3. ECA & ADEK
4. Nurseries & Schools (international. Public, chartered)
5. Ministry of Education
6. Zayed Higher Organization for People of Determination
7. General Authority of Islamic Affairs and Endowments
8. Department of Health | Pediatricians | Nurses | Child Psychologists | Developmental Specialists, Nutritionists
9. Abu Dhabi Municipality
10. Qualified ECE educators
11. Early Childhood Development trainers
12. Researchers/University faculty
13. Museums
14. Bookstores/Resource Providers
15. Youth advocates
16. Influences
17. Parent Coaches
18. Fitness instructors
19. Tent makers
20. Web Designers
21. Sign Language Interpreters
22. Designers for bus/caravan/RV re-modelling
23. Translators
24. Car/Truck/Van dealerships
25. Utilities (Etisalat, DU, DEWA, TAQA, ADP Power)
26. Airlines (Etihad, Wizz Air)
27. Hotels, Resorts
28. Developers
29. Real Estate Companies (e.g. Al Dar Properties)
30. Local, national and global funding organizations
31. Businesses who share a common vision for ECD (including support via CSR initiatives)
32. Local and Federal Organizations that provide Family Support
33. Vetted Investors/philanthropists who recognize the potential for return on investment ('ROI')
34. Community developers who support family friendly environments



## SECTION 2



### Team



Alice Cahn



Dr. Karen Kelly



Pablo Stansbery



Dr. Suha Al Hassan



Patricia Mezu



Baraka Binishaq



Ernst Houdkamp

### Members

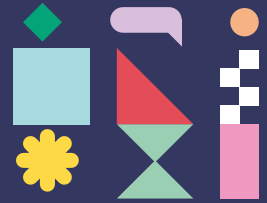
1. Alice Cahn - Specialist in children's entertainment media. Previously the vice president of both development and acquisition and social responsibility at the well-renowned Cartoon Network. In this role, she directed the development and acquisition of daytime programming aimed at a pre-school audience. Was the group president, television division at Sesame Workshop with expertise in developing research-based entertaining media across platforms that engage children
2. Dr. Karen Kelly - Early Childhood Development maven with extensive experience in the Arab world and U.S.A. More than 20 years of experience as an expert advisor with strong working experience in Asia, Africa and Arab regions, initiating multiple projects in the regions. Notably, ECE Doctoral Faculty at Walden University for 14 years and ex -Director of Aga Khan Early Learning Centre in Dubai.
3. Dr. Pablo Stansbery - Dr. Pablo Stansbery is Senior Global adviser for Early Childhood Development and Family Strengthening. He currently advises ECD projects with Education Cannot Wait (ECW), Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority (ECA) and the World Bank Multi-sector project in

Republic of Marshall Islands. He is the former Early Childhood Development (ECD) regional advisor at UNICEF (East Asia and Pacific Regional Office- EAPRO; and Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office- ESARO). Prior to joining UNICEF, Pablo was the International ECD Senior Director at Save the Children where he crafted innovative, multi-sector ECD programs in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Middle East, and the Pacific region. Dr. Stansbery has a BA in Cross-cultural Developmental Psychology from University of Denver (USA), Masters and Doctoral degrees in Human Development and Psychology from Harvard University (USA) and he completed his post-doctoral training at Boston Children's Hospital (Harvard Medical School).

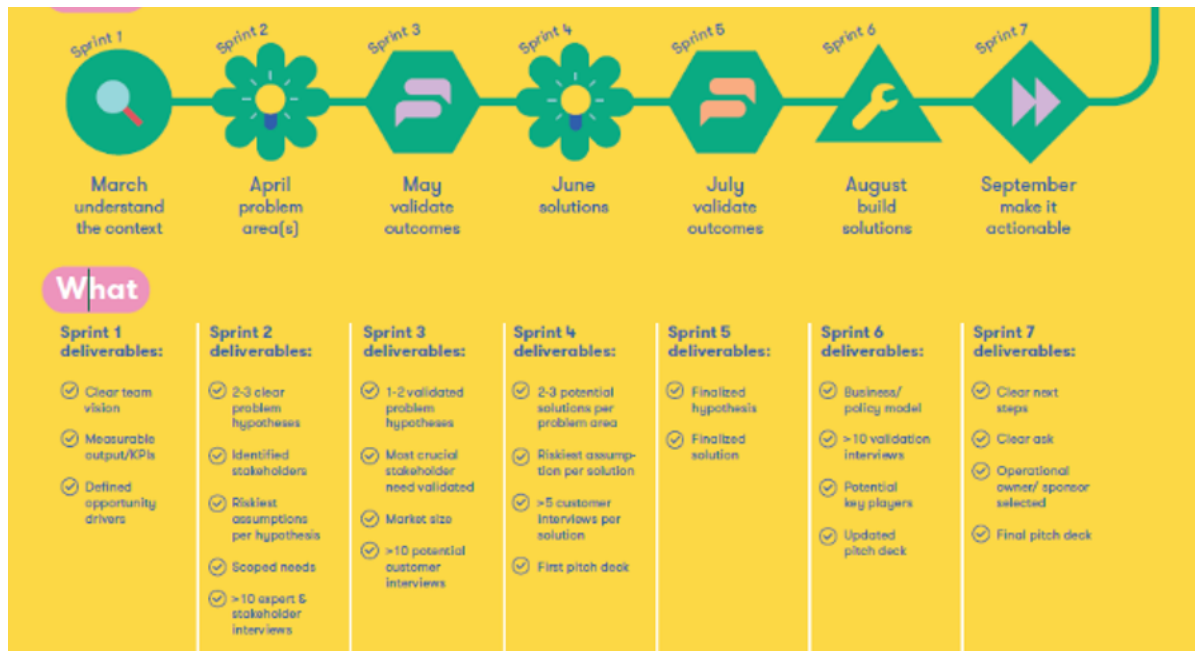
4. Dr. Suha Al Hassan - ECD Expert in the Middle East. A key founder of the Queen Rania Faculty for Childhood, Jordan. An established policy influencer and advocate. Consults for several international organizations on early childhood and special education, including UNICEF. Has worked in the USA, Jordan and the UAE (with Emirates College for Advanced Education). Published extensively in prestigious international journals in matters pertaining to ECD and cultural inclusiveness.
5. Patricia Mezu - Technical Consultant & ECED Expert in the U. A. E. and EMEA. Lawyer and expert early years educational advisor, specializing in leadership, middle management effectiveness, nursery start up, policy development and continuous professional development of educators. Has resided in the UAE for over 17 years.
6. Baraka Binishaq – ECA Intern. A Bachelor of Science, Psychology graduate, from Zayed University, Abu Dhabi. Winner of the Spring 2021 Ibn Sina Award for Research Excellence. Recipient of and Extended Award for Young Leaders, ILM.
7. Ernst Houdkamp - Experienced Facilitator and Design Thinker. Facilitates strategic processes for companies, entrepreneurs and organizations. Works with design thinking as the key to a process where questions are catalysts for research and understanding, highlighting ideas and options from multiple perspectives.



# SECTION 3



## Process



## Key Aspects Sprints 1 & 2

### The Journey

- First BWG Meeting: Getting to Know you; Getting to Know About the Brief - Social Interaction; Coming to Terms with the Use of Mural; Navigating Design Concept vs the rhetoric that is academia and research; sharing research-based data linked to social interaction, globally; Team Building
- Team considered the brief from ECA (somewhat unclear)
- For those who had never visited the UAE, efforts were made to ensure that they gained an understanding of what it represents and more specifically what the early childhood developmental landscape looks like (lots of learning and sharing relevant information - nursery Instagram pages; an overview prepared by Patricia; shared PDFs; YouTube links; conversations; shared team experiences (Suha, Karen, Patricia, Baraka). All in a bid to provide a realistic picture of the UAE
- Eventually, the team identified a tentative road map for navigating social interaction in children 0-8 years in the emirate of Abu Dhabi

- **Mural 1** - [Click here for the link](#)

The BWG agreed upon a team vision -

*Every child<sup>4</sup> in the UAE, between 0-8 years, will flourish when provided with opportunities to interact socially, within safe and secure environments that are based on nurturing and responsive care and education.*

- The team started using the design-thinking process by isolating three categories of stakeholders. This was a quick decision based on the timeline on the Mural.

Categories:

- Fathers & Male Role Models
- Mothers
- Creative developers

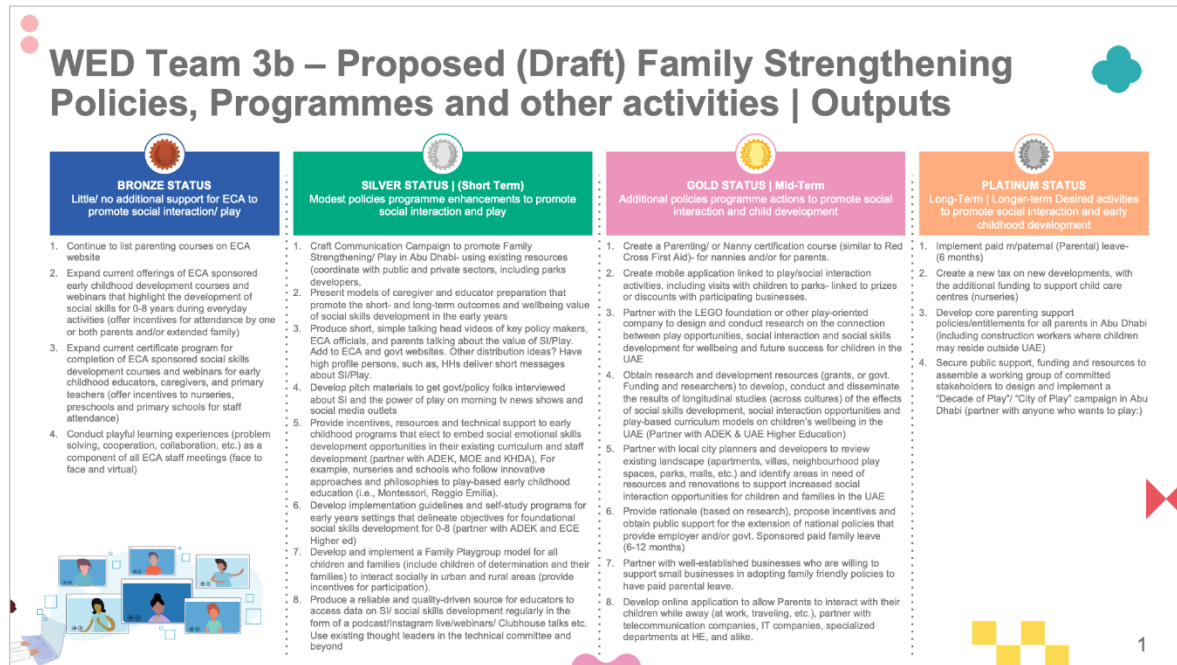
- **Mural 2** - [Click here for the link](#)

- Designated members set to work crafting questionnaires to interview stakeholders
- Patricia reached out to ECA via Strategy Connect, requesting for stakeholders. Karen, Suha, Patricia and Baraka contacted friends/family/colleagues in the UAE as potential interviewees. Alice and Patricia looked online to source companies in the media and nurseries in Abu Dhabi. Overall, the team connected with suitable stakeholders. This proved to be a challenging task. However, the team stuck together and persevered with patience and resilience. Social interaction proved to be useful in practice.
- **Stakeholders:** The first set of stakeholder interviews started, successfully on 14 April 2021. Stakeholders were cooperative and expressed interest and some appreciation for the WED Movement's plans, sharing their professional stories linked to social interaction with ease. Interviews were a chance to discover what was out there in 'the wild, wild world 'of mothers, fathers and creatives in Abu Dhabi and beyond. One or two scheduled meetings were cancelled by stakeholders at the last minute.
- Interviews exposed several factors. Notably, stakeholders did not always know what they want, and there was a tendency to put their best foot forwards. There was a possibility that what was said may not have represented their daily practice.
- **Process for Interviewing Stakeholders:** Questions were sent to interviewees beforehand so that they were prepared. With consent, meetings were recorded mainly on Zoom and once on MS Teams. If stakeholders preferred not to have the session recorded, the session was not recorded. Interviewers (including the technical consultant) made a note of all meetings. Notes and any recordings were saved on the shared folder as required by Strategy Connect. Baraka assisted with this part of the process.
- Research requested by BWG members was conducted by the TC with assistance from the team's intern.

<sup>4</sup> This is an inclusive term and necessarily includes children of determination.

## Key Deliverables

1. Team Vision
2. Measurable outputs



3. 2-3 Clear Problem Hypothesis
  - 1) Creating awareness on the importance of social interaction for young and unborn children
  - 2) Providing information regarding social interaction for future parents
  - 3) Role of the father in raising young children
4. Identified Stakeholders
  - ✓ Identified three stakeholder categories
  - ✓ Compiled questionnaires
  - ✓ Conducted Stakeholder Interviews
  - ✓ Conducted Research
5. +10 Expert and Stakeholder Interviews Conducted
  - ✓ Creative developers
  - ✓ Media
  - ✓ Child Psychologists
  - ✓ Curriculum Advisors for a center for children of determination
  - ✓ Mothers
  - ✓ Fathers
  - ✓ Grandfather

## Key Aspects Sprints 3 & 4

### 1. 1-2 Validated Problem Hypothesis

- 1) Conflicting and mixed messages amongst educators, about the value of social interaction in 0-8 educational settings.
- 2) Limited opportunities in primary grades for play-based learning and social interaction.
- 3) Interviews with expert stakeholders and feedback from the survey within the education community red-flagged early childhood care in the home. The survey that was designed and analyzed was a great start in highlighting the disconnect between homes, nurseries and primary schools. The educational community has the potential to significantly influence families about early childhood education.

It was evident that relatively few children in emirate of Abu Dhabi, including the regional areas (Al Dhafra), attend nursery/preschool. Most of their early care/social interaction is from domestic houseworkers. The concern raised included the issues of lack of child development knowledge and experience, responsive nurturing care, language and cultural differences and the fact that the nannies are busy with household tasks so that children may receive minimal attention or opportunities for interaction. This is a concern all over the region.

Recommendation: Perhaps the WED movement can make some difference, in this area, considering the historical and cultural reliance on houseworkers. The team's proposed ***Adventures on Wheels*** will provide part of the solution.

#### **Quote from Stakeholder:**



***Houseworkers should be taking care of the household so that parents can interact, play and socialize with children as much as possible'.***

### 2. Most Crucial Stakeholder Needs Validated

- 1) Insufficient time with children
- 2) Limited knowledge of, and access to, quality-driven activities and resources
- 3) Short parental leave post childbirth
- 4) Insufficient and inaccessible nursery care (cost)
- 5) Not enough trained and qualified staff in nurseries/kindergarten
- 6) Inconsistent voices on the role of play and child-centered initiatives
- 7) Insufficient paid family leave for new parents
- 8) Lack of accessible neighborhood "green" play spaces outside of Abu Dhabi city
- 9) Limited opportunities in primary grades for play-based learning and social interaction
- 10) No standard or national curriculum framework/model
- 11) Limited developmental milestone screenings
- 12) Lack of local and national funding streams for early childhood program development

### 3. +10 Potential Customer Interviews Conducted

- 1) Children
- 2) Youth
- 3) Researchers
- 4) Nanny
- 5) Focus Group - 39 educators - principal, leaders, SENCOS, teachers, teacher assistants (Abu Dhabi public school, MOE curriculum)
- 6) Nursery owner
- 7) Nursery director
- 8) Mothers
- 9) Teachers
- 10) Kindergarten Leaders
- 11) Specialist teachers, for children of determination

### 4. 2-3 Potential Solutions per Problem Area

- Create structures in parks or other public spaces (libraries museums, malls) that enhance and influence learning and impact the social interaction of children
- Consider the prospect of a 'play mobile'/an itinerant bus (es) that travel in between regions, setting up tents with qualified staff teaching communities about the value of purposeful play and developmentally appropriate activities. Providing replicable models of activities and easy-to-make, affordable or free, resources for children to learn and develop, working with their parents and wider families (a tool for social interaction) Patricia found (online), an interesting adaptation for a book mobile, using a camel instead of a bus
- Ask ECA to consider longitudinal research (5,10, 20 years), to measure the impact of social interaction in children 0-8 years.
- Continue to explore a 4-tiered approach to delivering the team's outputs
- Re-Considering the Boston Basics concept, very much a community and multi-sectoral approach to messaging (one consistent message when it comes to social interaction)
- Turning Abu Dhabi into an 'Emirate of Play'/'City of Play'/'Emirate That Plays on Purpose'
- Campaign for a 'Decade of Purposeful Play' in Abu Dhabi emirate
- Mural 3 - [Please click here](#)
- Mural 4 - [Please click here](#)

### 5. +5 Customer Interviews per Solution

- 1) ADEK representatives
- 2) Pediatricians
- 3) Maternity Nurse
- 4) Parent Coach and Influencer
- 5) Nursery directors
- 6) Trainer - early childhood education (CACHE)





## 6. First Pitch Deck- 27 May 2021

**DEMO DAY**  
**TEAM 3b | SOCIAL INTERACTION**  
27 MAY 2021

**What Is Social Interaction?**

"Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children, **purposeful play is serious learning.**"

Adapted from: Mr. Rogers

**We Have Interviewed**

Moms to be	First time moms	Moms with 2+ children	Fathers With young children
Young Adults	Nursery Teachers	Nursery Directors	Publishers
Children 5-8 years	Child Psychologist	Media Producers	Maternity Nurse

**Spend time with your children, tomorrow they're a day older.**

الطفل تعلم الأرقام "الأرقام في عملية التنمية الاجتماعية" الشيخ زايد بن سلطان آل نهيان

"The child is the focal point and starting point for the social development process."

HRH Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan

"Parents are the most important toy in the room."

Dr Karen Kelly

**Further Investigations & Considerations**

- Government & Industry Support For Extended, Paid Family Leave
- Expert Curated Online Spaces for Families.
- A One-Stop Shop for Age-Appropriate Children's Content
- Hotline for Parents Offering Quality Advice About Children's Development, Education & Entertainment

**Stakeholder 1 Voices**  
Mothers, Fathers, Extended Families

I'd feel more secure and less anxious if I had a reliable & trustworthy online resource for all my queries as a first-time mother.	Qualified nannies to provide support to families so that parents can be children's primary caregivers.	With extended, paid, maternity and paternity leave we could spend more time with our newborn.	Access to multi-generational support would be ideal after child birth.
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**Stakeholder 2 Voices**  
Early Childhood Professionals

Green neighborhood spaces to play in the vicinity of high-rise buildings.	I wish I had been taught soft skills to build my confidence when I was younger.	How do we raise awareness amongst parents about the importance of social interaction and holistic development? It's not all about letters and numbers....	Promoting social skills from all segments of the education community, especially monitoring and regulatory agencies.	Fully accessible, affordable and quality-driven early years education
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**Thank you!**  
**شكرا**  
**WED TEAM 3b**

- Alice Cahn
- Dr. Karen Kelly
- Pablo Stansbery
- Patricia Mezu
- Suha Al Hassan
- Intern: Baraka Binishaq

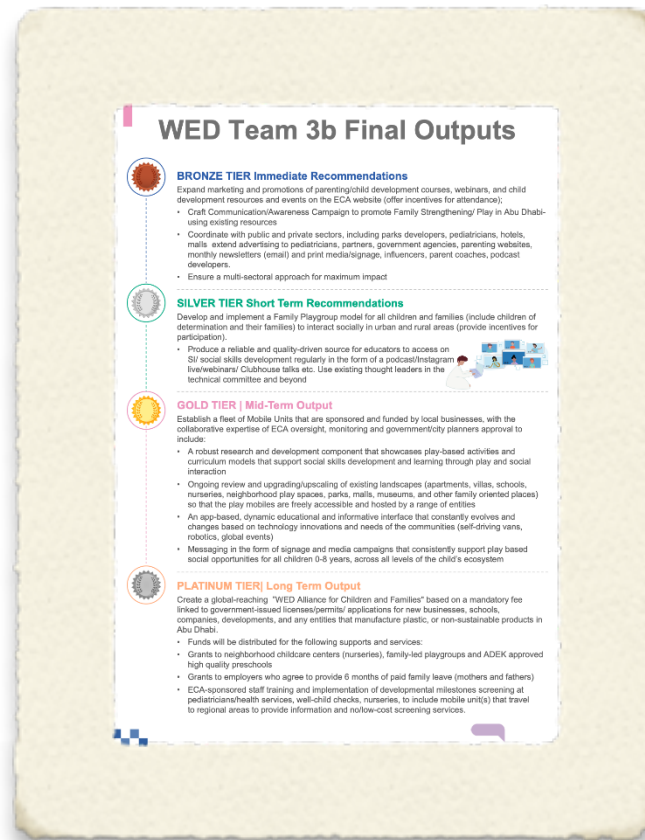
## Sprints 5, 6,7

### 1. Finalized Hypothesis

There is a lack of awareness and understanding among many parents, and some pre-primary and primary school educators, regarding the value and benefits of social interaction opportunities for children aged 0-8. In addition, many parents do not know **HOW** to socially interact with their children. This lack of awareness limits children's opportunities for social interaction, which may have detrimental results for their overall development, wellbeing and future success.



## 2. Finalized Solutions



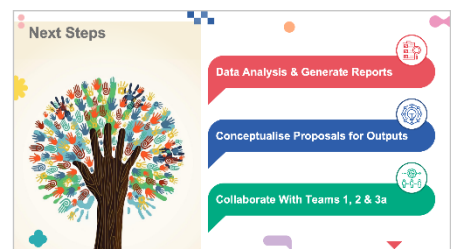
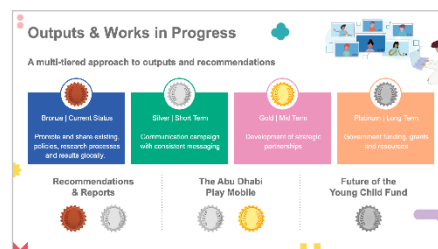
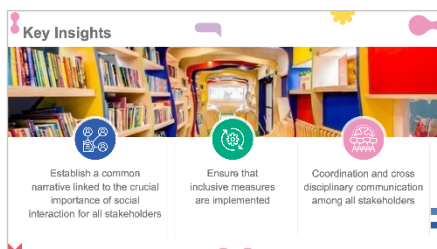
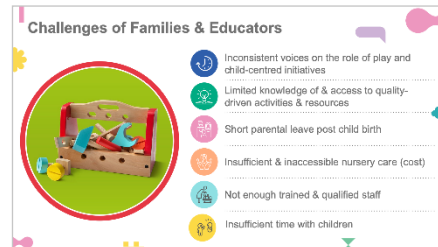
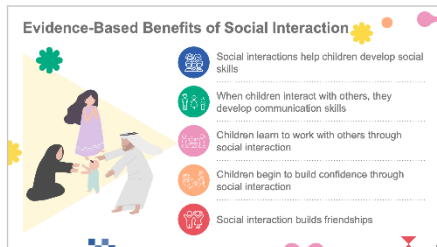
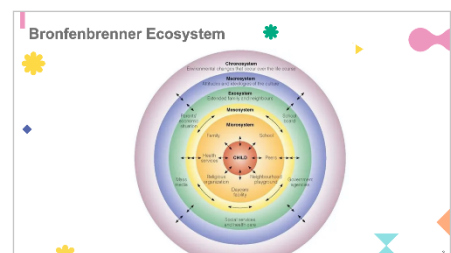
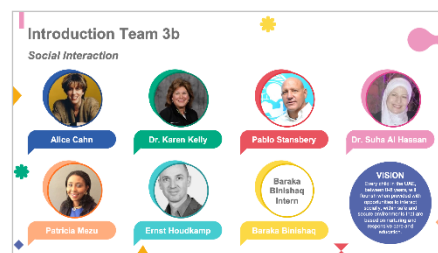
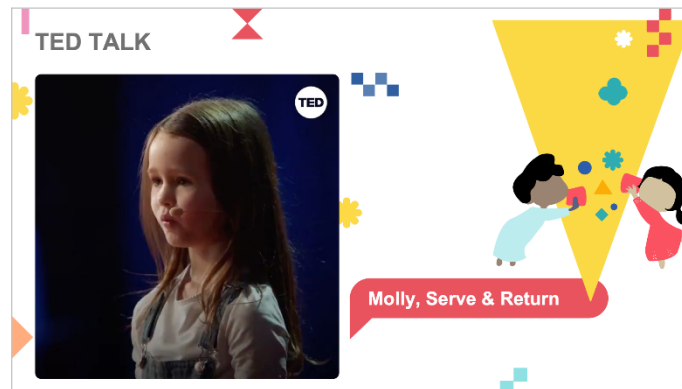
## 3. 10 Validation Interviews

- 1) Representatives of the Department of Education & Knowledge, Abu Dhabi (ADEK)
- 2) Representative of the Department of Community Development, Abu Dhabi
- 3) International early childhood education experts
- 4) Nursery directors
- 5) Nursery owner
- 6) UNICEF Representative
- 7) Design and Innovation Expert

## 4. Potential Key Players

Please refer to section 1 above.

## 5. Updated Pitch Deck - 5 August 2021



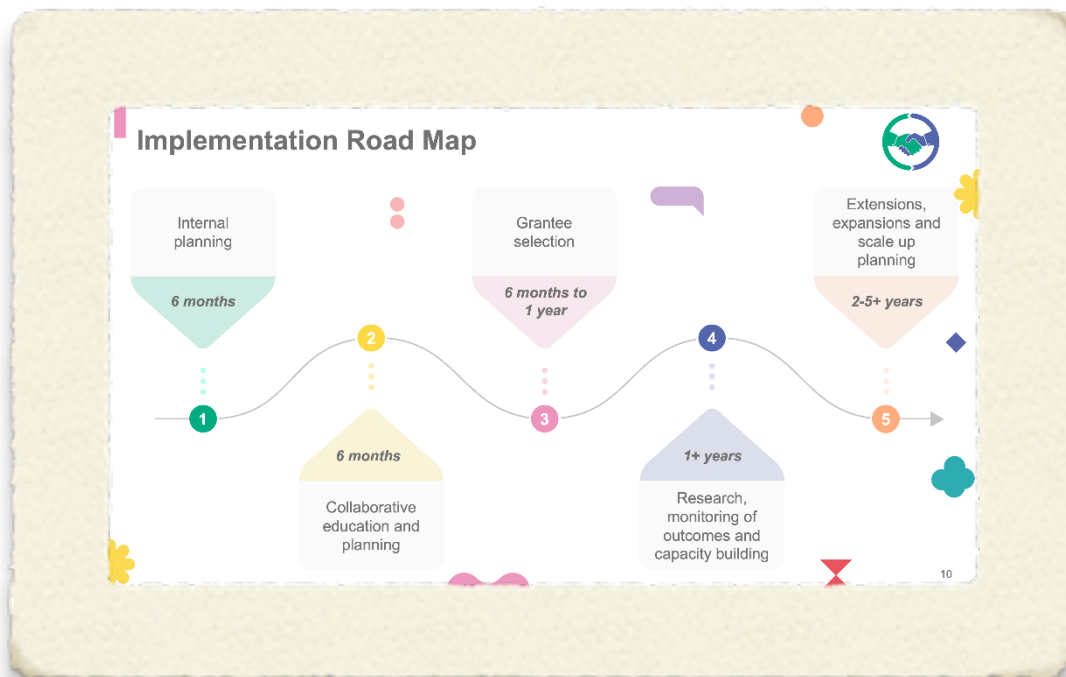
## 6. Clear Next Steps

ECA will consider the final report and decide in terms of the outputs best suited to their immediate, short term, mid-term and long-term plans

## Next Steps for Adventures on Wheels



## Next Steps for WED Alliance for Children and Families



## 7. Clear Ask

What will it take to maximize children's opportunities for social interaction and enhance their development of social skills, within Abu Dhabi's vision for overall wellbeing and success as citizens of the world?

## 8. Operational Owner/Sponsor Selected

A multi-disciplinary and inter-governmental approach spearheaded by ECA as master custodian.

## 9. Final Pitch Deck

**WED Demo Day Presentation**  
BWG Team 3b | 30 September 2021  
**SOCIAL INTERACTION:**  
An Essential Component of Children's Wellbeing

**Team Introduction**

**SCRIPT**  
Hi, we're the Social Interaction team - Pablo Stansberg, Alice Cahn, Karen Kelly and Suha Al Hassan. Our team's journey began in March 2021 and has continued through countless hours of meetings, hundreds of email exchanges, and awesome support from our technical ace, Patricia Mezu and facilitator, Emet Houkdam.

**Context**

**SCRIPT**  
We began our journey by studying the well known social-emotional framework developed by UN Bronfenbrenner. This framework illustrates a dynamic ecosystem where the child, who is the central focus, is surrounded by a multitude of social elements that overlap and influence their overall development and well-being.

**Our task**

**SCRIPT**  
We explored the challenges and explored solutions for these to enable children and their families within their social and emotional ecosystem. The team's continuous dialogue of determination.

We realized that children's overall wellbeing is linked to their social interaction opportunities. Building social skills is key and helps them solve problems, manage emotions, and communicate effectively, helping them succeed at home, at play, at work, and in society.

**Methodology / Research**

**SCRIPT**  
We carried out an extensive review of the literature and a systematic research approach through survey responses by 500 parents and 1000 educators and what seemed to be a plethora of research interviews. Speaking to parents, educators, principals, special educators, childcare workers, media producers, youth organizations, AQEF representatives, policy-makers, human resources, physicians, child development experts, and children, helped shape our understanding of the issues and identify possible solutions.

**Problems We Identified**

**SCRIPT**  
We learned from stakeholders that a lack of awareness about the value and benefits of social-emotional wellbeing exists, especially among parents. A mother from Abu Dhabi asked: "I know social interaction skills are important, but I don't know how children learn and practice them! What should I be doing?"

**Defining Our Focus**

**SCRIPT**  
As early as infancy, children learn how to act and react to others, as babies and preschoolers, they "learn" how to establish relationships and are being told that their perspective, effort for building friendships. There is a need to develop very social skills at a young age. For the first few years, children receive many lessons and many in-person interactions. Our mission: reduce that children and families need support to engage in social interaction that is nurturing, responsive, respectful and effective.

**The Journey to Our Solutions**

**SCRIPT**  
Initially, we explored a range of ideas, regions, we gained experience. The intervention space, the scope and the social-emotional ecosystem that we provide social skills, we explore it in depth. We explored a range of ideas, regions, we gained experience. The intervention space, the scope and the social-emotional ecosystem that we provide social skills, we explore it in depth.

**The Mobile Play and Learning Labs and Supporting Campaign**

**SCRIPT**  
The key message to parents is that children learn social-emotional skills and are not taught in the classroom and are not taught in the classroom. The key message to parents is that children learn social-emotional skills and are not taught in the classroom and are not taught in the classroom.

**How will the Play and Learning Labs and other Awareness Initiatives be funded?**

**SCRIPT**  
The UAE is resource-rich in comparison to many other countries. A collaborative funding alliance is proposed to be formed in Abu Dhabi, with outcomes to the Arabian Gulf States and, on a wider scale, globally.

- The WED Alliance for Children and Families would establish partnerships with funding organizations and foundations that would offer sustainable models of support for social initiatives and innovations in family strengthening, nurturing relationships and early childhood care and development.
- The Alliance will fund projects, programs and services to improve the social interaction opportunities and wellbeing of children and their families.

**Sustainability**

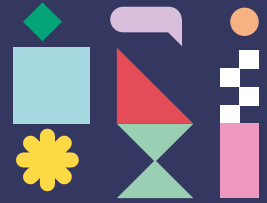
Partnerships, Funding, Ownership, Coordination and Collaboration, Monitoring and Evaluation, Technical Expertise.

**Close**

**SCRIPT**  
Thank you

THANK YOU

# SECTION 4



## Key Insights

### Key Insights & Outputs March, April 2021

#### Key Insights March, April 2021

The team discussed:

- Vision - why they were contributing and what the scope of Team 3b was
- Themes - from themes, ideas will be created
- Ideas - related to stakeholders/clients/customers who have needs | proposals also have to be considered.
- The aim of Team 3b - to contribute to a different and improved approach regarding social interaction and to empower the ecosystem of early childhood development in the UAE.

#### Parking Lot 1

The Team decided to create a parking lot. This represents items for later discussion and pertinent ideas:

1. Critical importance of social interaction ('SI') skills from birth. It impacts all areas of development. Consider a resource for parents to show how critical social interaction is. There is a gap here in the UAE (assumption)
2. Data or package should exist for families to guide them as soon as a child is born. Awareness of the importance of SI is required as well as understanding and support. Perhaps vision should focus on this aspect
3. Technology shouldn't drive our efforts, but entertainment might be a powerful tool in distributing what we think rather than a pamphlet. Nowadays, for example tick tock videos have influence
4. There should be consistent messaging from MOE, ADEK etc. on social skills and social interaction
5. Multi-generational care - the practice of elders blending with young children is happening in many countries

It was agreed that some stakeholders would be clustered which Ernst did on Mural as discussions ensued:

1. Government entities - Ministry of Health
2. Monitoring agencies and developing policies, rules, procedures - ECA, ADEK, MOE etc
3. Parents | Kin
4. Caregivers
5. Children/ the Child
6. Children of Determination | Children with Autism
7. Extended Families - siblings, cousins, uncles, aunts, grandparents etc
8. Kindergarten and Nursery Teachers | Early childhood educators
9. Pediatricians | Maternal health care providers | Those who support new mothers
10. UAE citizens and expatriates
11. Social Media Influencers
12. Advertisers | Marketers | Marketing companies | Corporations e.g. influence of companies, Facebook, Google etc.
13. Paid carers - nursery staff | nannies | housekeepers
14. Unpaid care - the old lady down the street
15. People in companies responsible for children's creative resource development
16. Curriculum developers - early academics | Book developers
17. Lecturers & Trainers in universities and colleges
18. Community Developers - museums, malls, parks, playgrounds, new buildings
19. Staff in Schools

Team members identified 3 main stakeholders to be interviewed:

1. New parent(s) in Abu Dhabi/U.A.E.; 1st pregnancy; 2nd or third trimester (antenatal stage) - Karen & Suha
2. Creative Developer/Editor/Publisher in Abu Dhabi/U.A.E. - Alice
3. Fathers and male role models - Pablo & Suha

Pablo, Suha, Alice and Karen agreed to define the problems and assumptions and prepare a list of questions. Pablo agreed to post a protocol of questions on Mural.

## Quotes April 2021

Suha: “Safe environments where children and adults can participate in a wide range of experiences to develop their full potential”.

Karen Kelly: “There are five components of universal social interaction

- Non-verbal and verbal communication
- Competition for resources
- Conflict (all cultures have conflict that needs to be resolved)
- Cooperation/collaboration - critical
- Accommodation - empathy, kindness, community wellbeing”.

Pablo: “Vision not just about the child, it has to be others around the child such as the caregivers. Empowerment of caregivers is important”.

Suha: “Consider extended families, adults around the child, caregivers, trainers of caregivers. Look at broad ecosystem; address the whole 360 degrees”.

Karen: “Consider the opportunities that families have”.

Alice: “It is Important to develop ideas about the primary target audience (0-8 years) that appeals to and can be applied to the target audience”.

Suha: “It is essential to include opportunities for all children including children of determination. For example, what does it look like for children with autism when it comes to social interaction?”

Pablo – “Every boy and girl/child has equal opportunity to developmentally appropriate responsive caregiving”.

Alice: “Equal opportunity and resources to reach their full potential to communicate and understand how to resolve conflict to have the opportunity to collaborate and work together; to work together with basic kindness and empathy. Having a ‘balanced diet ’as it were”.

Pablo – Mentioned that it was important to temper expectations. There were lots of needs of the end-user. He cautioned that the interviews were not comprehensive or thorough in terms of context. He suggested that interviewers ask parents what they had done with their children in the last 24 hours. More open -ended questioning techniques.

Alice: Mentioned the impact of technology; soap operas. At some point it was popular for some mothers in the USA to watch soap operas when their children were young. This has been the inspiration for social change.

Pablo: “Responsive caregiving is essential for children’s needs. Building trust in social relationships, responsive seeding; nurturing care framework. We want to look at the demand and supply of responsive care. But we also want to consider the demand itself. Scaffolding is not an immediate A to Z supported



by science. The team should use open -ended questions and consider the person's narrative. Three stakeholders have been narrowed down from many more”.

Alice stressed the importance of using open ended questions and expanded on challenges. Fathers and mothers are the challenge and they could ask questions about dreams and hopes.

Pablo: Use inclusionary criteria. Sophisticated questions, but due to limited time the team is going through a process that is sample by convenience. It is only a validation of the process. It is a process of engaging key stakeholders. He advised that the team should not get lost in getting stakeholders.

Suha mentioned the fact that mom’s need childcare on site at work. This is lacking. There are a good number of unqualified nannies that are used. Now in Abu Dhabi they are rethinking this problem.

Karen mentioned staffing and the quality of provision, funding from parents and also the fact that it is expensive for a lot of families to pay for nurseries. This is one of so many roadblocks. Suha agreed that funding is a big issue.

## Parking Lot 2

- Pablo: With resource kits for new parents often no one reads them. Pablo’s dream - 1st time pregnancy in 2nd and 3rd trimester if the parents understand SI, subsequent children will benefit. During the antenatal period create something rich and enticing that mother and father attend. A ‘pre-parent’ concept when child is in utero.
- Karen: Social interaction and responsive care when the children are in utero - nurturing, care giving e.g. reading and playing music etc. the child’s first book, picture book - how to read to a child, where to place the child, workbook on adjectives, descriptions. This is an area that’s missing.
- Equate SI to something new that parents must do. You don’t leave the hospital without a car seat; how do we tie social interaction to such practical safety elements? So that it’s dealt with that early on.
- The SI emphasis cannot stop at the antenatal stage and should be like a family tradition. imbued in each age group from 0-8 years as children develop.
- Subscriptions on a monthly basis, linked to social media; get journalists to promote this as a nation, as a people
- Should feel like part of life not an add-on. Should be something with respect to the first child as it is the right opportunity. Not necessarily physical but something about the SI of the newcomer. As they wait for the newborn to arrive, something that is innovative.
- Stakeholder interviews started. All interviews were conducted via video conferencing by Suha, Patricia, Karen and Alice.



## Key Insights, Quotes & Outputs May 2021

### Key Insights May 2021

1. Early childhood development (ECD) sets the stage for life-long thriving<sup>5</sup>.
2. Investing in ECD is one of the most critical and cost-effective investments a country can make to improve adult health, education and productivity in order to build human capital and promote sustainable development
3. Efforts to improve ECD can bring about human, social and economic improvements for both individuals and societies.
4. An estimated 250 million children around the world are at risk of not meeting their developmental potential in the early years of life.
5. The focus on PLAY will not override the critical importance of nurturing and responsive caregiving, particularly for the 0-3 age group.
6. Coordination and cross-disciplinary communication among the many agencies and separate systems could be vastly improved.
7. It seems that the challenge we face is not so much coming up with new programs and ideas, but coming up with a focus and strategy to personalize, design, coordinate and promote those that best suit ECA and the wider Abu Dhabi/U.A.E. community.
8. Consider the role of outdoor play in nature – parks, green spaces; there are several ways of playing. Play is one tool for developing social interaction.
9. Common messaging to all stakeholders concerning social interaction - Families, Extended Families, Pediatricians, Educators, Educational Leaders, Educational Regulatory Authorities, Government Departments (e.g. Community Development Agency, Health, Department of Interior, Abu Dhabi Municipality), Spiritual Leaders (e.g. Imams).

### Quotes May 2021

- “How do we reward child friendly practices in the work place? If companies are good to employees, such companies should be promoted as good examples. It will be important to include corporations and businesses as stakeholders.” | Alice Cahn
- “Workforce laws exist and they have advantages if there is child care at work. The issue is that the quality of provision has to be improved.” | Suha Al Hassan
- “Family leave - (mother and father’s leave) there should be options. Once a child is born.” | Karen Kelly
- “The ‘Parent Friendly Label ’is a workplace incentive for companies to provide parent friendly environments. The end goal is to identify all places in Abu Dhabi that support parents and then benchmark. The aim is to encourage places to have more parent friendly workplaces. | Ammar Al Raisi (ECA representative)
- “In India 50+ employees need to have childcare provided by the company. From Tushita Mukharjee on chat - guidelines- <https://wcd.nic.in/sites/default/files/National%20Minimum%20Guidelines.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> SDG 4.1

- Alice talked about creative developers. She is focusing on who is producing content and for whom. There seem to be a lot of ex-pats producing content for ex-pats. It is a question of prioritizing social interaction. Presently social interaction is not a critical component of wellbeing. Can we promote social interaction awareness on the basis that it is critical and makes a drastic difference?
- “What information is available at public hospitals for expectant mothers? There is no relief from anxiety for mothers-to-be about hospital provision.” | Karen Kelly
- “The definition of ‘social interaction’ may not be clear to the public. People do not know what social interaction is.” | Karen Kelly
- “I have interviewed an Emirati father with a grandson and maintaining culture and values is important. During lockdown he had more time to spend with his children and grandchild”. | Suha Al Hassan
- “The approach should also be multi-sectoral. For example, a catch phrase to reflect the fact that play is/should be central”. | Pablo
- Pablo: mentioned a colleague in New York who is an architect in parks and that safety is an element that has to be considered when talking about social interaction.
- “I realize that the ECA is a new entity and their reach is growing as we speak. My sense is they could have a very important coordinating or “clearinghouse” role for early childhood care and education for all stakeholders. | Karen Kelly
- “Class systems influence social interaction. It's an influencer particularly in light of COVID”. | Pablo
- “I like the idea of a play mobile, but we may need to be a little cautious not to give contradictory messages regarding screen time! Regarding Al Dhafra area, all nurseries are now closed and currently there are none in this area due to the pandemic. I liked the idea that's come up of buses pitched up with tents to create impact in these regional areas where services for families and children are limited. I remember there was a similar project in Jordan where there were mobile libraries (buses customized) traveling to remote-under-served areas targeting children below 8 and their families”. | Suha Al Hassan

### **Outputs explored May 2021**

- Impacting legislation, policies and procedures
- Supporting mothers and fathers-to-be in terms of extended family leave when a child is born
- Considering child-friendly workplaces offering parents onsite or nearby quality driven, affordable and accessible childcare
- Reviewing the support and resources given by public hospitals to mothers-to-be in the 2nd and third trimester, as well as after a child is born
- Quality, qualified childcare in the home environment and beyond (nurseries, preschools)
- Access to multi-generational support to all families
- Raised awareness about the importance and essence of social interaction for ALL children between the ages of birth - 8 years, including children of determination

## Key Insights, Quotes & Outputs June 2021

### Key Insights June 2021:

- The team decided to narrow its focus and agreed that it was essential to start within the home environment of the child, before considering any other elements of his/her ecosystem.
- Maternity, paternity, parental leave will be part of policy development.
- The team considered the possibility of working with ECA to enhance the newly developed Family-Friendly label.
- Families, friends, time to play, places to play (urban and suburban and green spaces), ways to play (not theme parks or places that require paid access), simplicity of play,
- Consider play as a basis of social interactions. Play is the ‘highest form of research’.
- It was noted that the ‘why’ of play has been adequately dealt with by existing ECA resources shared with the team by Patricia e.g on the ECA website and on the Bright Start website (a partner of ECA).
- It is important to explore social interaction in the context of communities, evidenced from an interview held on 13 June between Suha, Patricia and an Emirati mother of 7 children. The community can come together safely to share ideas and build knowledge relevant to child development as well as social interaction.

### Quotes June 2021:

- “It is important for parents to make the direct connection between play and social interaction. Play is social interaction. Play is the strong message. Play is the important way to learn about social interaction”. | Karen and Suha
- “It would be good to highlight the importance of social interaction to future leaders through a communication campaign”. | Karen and Alice
- “Position of play is important”. | Pablo
- “Routine daily interaction: wake/bathe/breastfeed/outdoor. I suggest daily routines, social interaction within a normal day”. | Pablo
- “These would be great outputs - how, when, where, what. Put in place short term, long term; bronze gold, platinum, using the Etihad guest services model. (Likert scale)”. | Pablo
- “It is essential to build habits of play and social interaction”. | Alice
- “How do we reach people with the message; how do we disseminate the message? E.g. via a slogan”. | Whole Team consensus
- “There should be common messaging to all stakeholders with respect to social interaction. Messages to parents, educators, trainers, health sector, schools, regulators etc., should be reinforced and changed.”. | Whole team
- Pablo: “The idea of the tiered system emerged from reflections during Demonstration Day when the query about how policy makers prefer short term positive results, en route to longer term vision of ECD investment. We include immediate recommendations that would show positive impact in short term as well as lay foundation for future, longer term investments”.
- “If we can speak to the officials at ADEK it will verify some of the comments that we have heard from nursery directors. They may be able to give us some new ideas”. | Karen Kelly

- “How do we convince stakeholders about this (SI’s) crucial part of children’s education?” Karen
- “Play can have a negative connotation. An app should be a tool in an awareness campaign”. | Pablo
- “It is important for impact to be from government down and there should be a multi-sectoral approach; making play central”. | Pablo
- “There is strength in understanding the umbrella under which all of the initiatives for Team 3b lie. | Alice
- Pablo mentioned the essence and importance of simple day-to-day practices that can be adopted by families. Daily routines.
- Suha said daily quality interactions were important, rather than quantity.
- Alice: “un-communicated initiatives can sometimes lead to inaction; there is sometimes a missing component. What’s already out there in the public and what priorities do they take?”
- Team: How do we reach people with the important message? How do we disseminate the message? Is this something we can pitch? And possibly work with a marketing specialist or communication company? “Who did you play with today?” There’s a possibility for a slogan
- Patricia: Reminded the team that they could also send out a survey. One of the other team’s is taking this approach
- Suha: we could consider a survey asking the right open-ended questions. It would be quick testing. Not deep and academic, simple questions, multiple choice / a poll. A hypothesis around play, interaction with parents, teachers. This could reach more numbers of stakeholders.

### **Outputs June 2021**

- Creating a slogan - connecting with marketing and communication experts
- Creating a survey to ask stakeholders questions, including city planners and Abu Dhabi municipality (Tushita from Strategy Connect agreed to assist with this process).
- Possibility: Creating a team slogan, logo, jingle, visual representation of what the team’s considered outputs will be.
- Exploring a 4-tiered approach to delivering the team’s outputs.
- Considering the Boston Basics concept - very much a community and multi-sectoral approach to messaging (one consistent message when it comes to social interaction).

## Key Insights, Quotes & Outputs July 2021

### Key Insights July 2021

- Possibility: Creating a team slogan, logo, jingle, visual representation of what the team's considered outputs will be.

#### ***The team:***

- Continued exploring a 4-tiered approach to delivering the team's outputs.
- Re-considered the Boston Basics concept – as before, very much a community and multi-sectoral approach to messaging
- Discussed the possibility of turning Abu Dhabi into an 'Emirate of Play'/'City of Play'/'Emirate That Plays on Purpose'.
- Considered a campaign for a 'Decade of Purposeful Play' in Abu Dhabi emirate.
- Discussed creating structures in parks or other public spaces (libraries museums, malls) that enhance and influence learning and impact the social interaction of children.

### Additional Insights July 2021

- Social development is a critical component of overall development. The literature on child development (as well as experts) agree that children develop and learn naturally through social interaction and engagement with others.
- With social interaction and play, ensure that inclusive measures are implemented.
- Play can be solitary, or with objects in the environment, and is not always "social".
- Recommended asking ECA to consider longitudinal research (5, 10, 20 years), to measure the impact of social interaction in children 0-8 years.
- The team continued to review the framework suggested by team 3a to decide whether it could be used.
- Dialogue started with team 3a (via Alice Cahn & Nikki Martyn) to determine how there could be closer collaboration with a view to shared outputs.
- The two main stakeholders stayed in focus - Families and Educators.
- Following the technical committee session on 30 June 2021, additional practical outputs were considered for use by parents, children and educators.
- Team decided to ask for a connection within Abu Dhabi Municipality to explore green spaces in the emirate.
- The team started to narrow its focus using the dot-mocracy technique.

### Quotes July 2021:

- Karen: "When preparing the children for the future the team's focus will include all children (children of determination as well), all people groups - Emiratis as well as expatriate communities). The team will continue to use research-based ideas and build on the surveys and interviews within the community, being careful not to over generalize with the understanding that this is a snapshot into the Abu Dhabi community".

- Karen: the team needs something actionable; ‘show’ rather than ‘tell’.
- Alice and Karen: It is time for the groups (1,2,3a,3b) to model a collaborative approach. To come together in a way that we (3b) are recommending that the departments in Abu Dhabi come together - collaboratively, for the benefit of the children.
- Karen: “The team has created a multi-tiered approach to outputs and recommendations, beginning with minimal, low cost recommendations primarily targeting the ECA. Each tier expands the targets, scope of commitment and resources needed to reach the broader population. The tiered approach to outputs is recommended as a strategic model to gradually position the UAE as a global leader in promoting opportunities for children to develop social skills for present and future wellbeing”.
- Suha: “Most early childhood interventions are designed to work through caregivers -- typically mothers; to achieve better outcomes for children. But what effect do these interventions have on the caregivers themselves? New research from David Evans & colleagues draws attention to this understudied topic in our field and suggests ways to broaden the lens of our outcome measures. | <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/how-do-early-child-development-interventions-affect-mothers-most-cases-we-dont-know>”.
- Alice: “Our belief is that early and sustained exposure to social interaction skills positively impacts children's ability to become successful lifelong learners and participants in society. I think we are still struggling with the best ways to demonstrate the effect of early exposure to social interaction skills and social/educational/workplace success as children grow up”.
- Karen: “All entities should promote the same message - signage, apps, research and development is critical. Abu Dhabi can take the data and make measurements”.
- Alice: “Measure engagement, comprehension and use, but also the impact on children’s learning and development. Establish and share longitudinal research”.
- Suha: “It could be cross-cultural research. The base line is very important. This is the drive. Data-driven outcomes. The research component is important”.

### **Collaborating with other teams:**

- A meeting took place between Alice, Karen, Patricia, Baraka and Nikki from team 3a.
- Patricia collaborated with the other technical consultants via telephone and also arranged a Zoom session with a number of the TC’s to discuss salient points for shared ideas.
- Team 3b members viewed the murals from team 2, and demo day presentations of teams 1 and 2 to get a clearer idea of what they are doing. This was beneficial and highlighted the fact that there is some overlap between the teams in a few areas.
- Two main stakeholders remained in focus - Families and Educators.
- The team reached out, via Patricia and Suha to a pediatrician.
- Team requested (from ECA) but did not receive a contact within Abu Dhabi Municipality to explore green spaces in the emirate.

## **Outputs July 2021**

1. Establish a common narrative linked to the crucial importance of social interaction for families and educators.
2. At Karen's suggestion, consider the prospect of a 'play mobile'/an itinerant bus (es) that travels in between regions, setting up tents with qualified staff; teaching communities about the value of purposeful play and developmentally appropriate activities. Providing replicable models of activities and easy-to-make, affordable or free, resources for children to learn and develop, working with their parents and wider families (a tool for social interaction). Patricia found (online), an interesting adaptation for a book mobile - the use of a camel instead of a bus.
3. The team planned to narrow its focus in terms of whittling down the tiered outputs. There were more than 20.

## **Key Insights, Quotes & Outputs August 2021**

### **Insights August 2021**

- Establish a common narrative linked to the crucial importance of social interaction for all stakeholders.
- Ensure that inclusive measures are implemented.
- Coordination and cross disciplinary communication among all stakeholders.
- Team was still waiting for a contact within Abu Dhabi Municipality to explore green spaces in the emirate.

### **Quotes August 2021:**

Karen: "Approval would require partnership with a local business that would provide the vehicle (bus, trolley, train car(s) truck, van, RV, airstream, etc.), as well as a driver (inexpensive in the UAE), inspections, registration, maintenance and fuel".

Karen, Alice, Suha: "Create a "Future of the Young Child Fund" that is a required fee attached to government issued licenses/permits/ applications for new businesses, schools, companies, developments, and any entities that manufacture plastic, or non-sustainable products in Abu Dhabi.

Funds will be distributed for the following supports and services:

- grants to neighborhood childcare centers (nurseries), family-led playgroups and ADEK approved high quality preschools.
- grants to employers who agree to provide 6 months of paid family leave (mothers and fathers).
- ECA sponsored staff training and implementation of developmental milestones screening at pediatricians/health services well-child checks, nurseries, to include mobile unit(s) that travel to rural areas to provide information and no-cost screening services".

Pablo - "this is the WED Movement ('world'), not only Abu Dhabi".

## **Outputs August 2021 (similar to July, but the team expanded the concepts)**

- Abu Dhabi Play Mobile - itinerant bus (es) that travels in between regions, setting up tents with qualified staff, teaching communities about the value of purposeful play and developmentally appropriate activities and conducting developmental screening. Patricia created an outline for the concept, detailing key activities, resources, partners etc. aim to have a pilot.
- Future of the Young Child Fund
- To consider longitudinal research (5,10, 20 years), to measure the impact of social interaction in children 0-8 years.
- Considering a campaign approach to messaging (one consistent message when it comes to social interaction).
- Recommendations.

## **Key Insights & Outputs September 2021**

### **Key Insights September 2021**

- Team discussed the best way to plan for presenting the video for the final demo day.
- Patricia invited Kiera from Seven Media team to join the BWG session, following 4 meetings between Patricia and the Sevens team providing them with adequate background information about the team's progress from March to September.
- This included:
  - 2 concept notes.
  - Sample videos.
  - The team's proposals.
  - PowerPoint presentation.
  - Recording of PowerPoint by Suha.
  - Sample images of what the mobile unit could look like.
  - An overview of the team's journey.
  - An overview of the essence of social interaction - theory.

### **Quotes:**

- Not applicable in September as is everyone preparing for final technical committee, final Demo Day, 2 proposals and final report.

### **Outputs For Team 3b September 2021:**

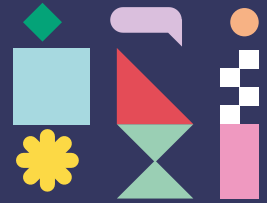
1. Adventures on Wheels - mobile learning units, showcasing concepts for purposeful play and other activities linked to child development and health, boosting and enhancing social interaction in all children in the emirate of Abu Dhabi, 0-8 years.
2. A high-level campaign setting out the essence and vital importance of developing social interaction in children 0-8 years.



3. WED Alliance for Children and Families.
4. Reports from 2 Surveys.
5. Report on Voices of Stakeholders.
6. Recommendations:
  - 1) To consider longitudinal research (5,10, 20 years), to measure the impact of social interaction in children 0-8 years.
  - 2) Develop and implement a Family Playgroup model for all children and families (include children of determination and their families) to interact socially in urban and rural areas (provide incentives for participation).
  - 3) Produce a reliable and quality-driven source for educators to access on SI/ social skills development regularly in the form of a podcast/Instagram live/webinars/ Clubhouse talks etc. Use existing thought leaders in the technical committee or other known ECE/ECD specialists (including child psychologists) already partnering with ECA.

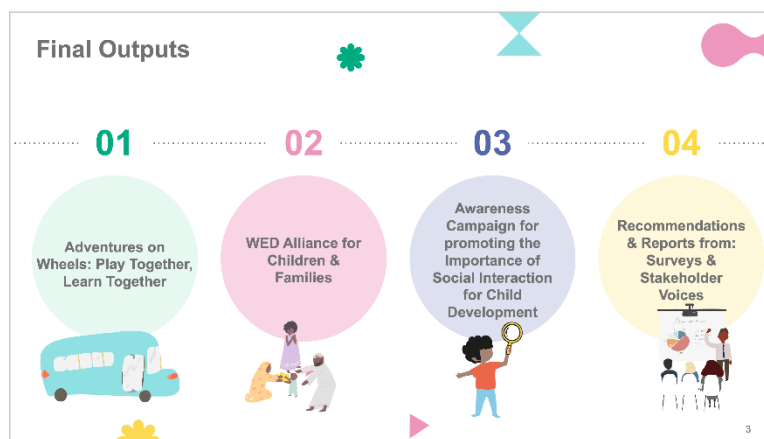


# SECTION 5



## Outputs | Solutions

Please refer to the detailed proposals in the Appendices for the two main outputs. Additional outputs below.



**Adventures on Wheels**  
Play Together, Learn Together

**VISION**  
Every child in the UAE, between 0-8 years, will flourish when provided with opportunities to interact socially, within safe and secure environments that are based on nurturing and responsive care and education

**THE MISSION**  
To impact families within Abu Dhabi with high quality resources, activities and advice to enhance social interaction in children 0-8 years, using purposeful play as a tool

**WHY WED MOBILE PLAY & LEARNING LABS?**  
To develop a fleet of mobile play and learning units that will teach, and allow children and caregivers to practice, critical social interaction skills and holistic learning styles.

**DOES SOCIAL INTERACTION REALLY MATTER?**  
**Yes!** Decades of child development research has confirmed that to be prepared for the future, children need opportunities to develop social interaction skills that civil societies value such as:

- Self-discipline
- Motivation
- Communication
- Decision-making
- Compromise
- Negotiation
- Problem-solving; and
- Collaboration

The return on investment (ROI) in early childhood care and education (ECCE) has been thoroughly researched and is well established and quantifiable in countries all over the world | [The Heckman Equation](#)

THE WED Movement | A global ECD movement pioneering the philosophy of preparing children for the future.

**WED ALLIANCE FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES**  
Investing in the Future of Abu Dhabi

**VISION**  
Every child in the UAE, between 0-8 years, will flourish when provided with opportunities to interact socially, within safe and secure environments that are based on nurturing and responsive care and education

**THE MISSION**  
To establish a Family Support Initiative (or Fund) designed to underscore the importance of social interaction, beginning at birth, and to offer resources to cultivate innovative strategies that foster nurturing care of young children.

**WHY AN ALLIANCE?**  
The WED Alliance will inspire political commitment and increased investment, from public, private sector and foundations, designed to strengthen the best asset of every young child, her/his family. The Alliance will craft coordinated, consistent and evidenced-based messaging related to the vision for social interaction.

**DOES SOCIAL INTERACTION REALLY MATTER?**  
**Yes!** Decades of child development research has confirmed that to be prepared for the future, children need opportunities to develop social interaction skills that civil societies value such as:

- Self-discipline
- Motivation
- Communication
- Decision-making
- Compromise
- Negotiation
- Problem-solving; and
- Collaboration

The return on investment (ROI) in early childhood care and education (ECCE) has been thoroughly researched and is well established and quantifiable in countries all over the world | [The Heckman Equation](#)

THE WED Movement | A global ECD movement pioneering the philosophy of preparing children for the future.

## Output 3: Campaign Adventures on Wheels; Play Together, Learn Together

### Vision and Objectives

**Vision:** To impact families within Abu Dhabi with high-quality resources, activities and advice to enhance social interaction in children 0-8 years, using purposeful play as a tool.

**Objective:** To develop a fleet of mobile play and learning units that will teach, and allow children and caregivers to practice, critical social interaction skills.

### Summary

1. Children learn crucial social, academic and workplace skills through play and practice. Adventures on Wheels will be free or low cost, fun and focused on evidence-based social skills development.
2. The mobile units will be fully inclusive and easily accessible by all UAE nationals and residents; supporting parents and educators' goals to help children succeed and become life-long learners.
3. The mobile vehicles will deliver local, consistent and flexible learning opportunities using content developed by early childhood experts who understand what appeals to young children: Art and Music, STEM, Sport and Fitness, Cooking, Imaginative Play, Storytelling and Reading, and much more.

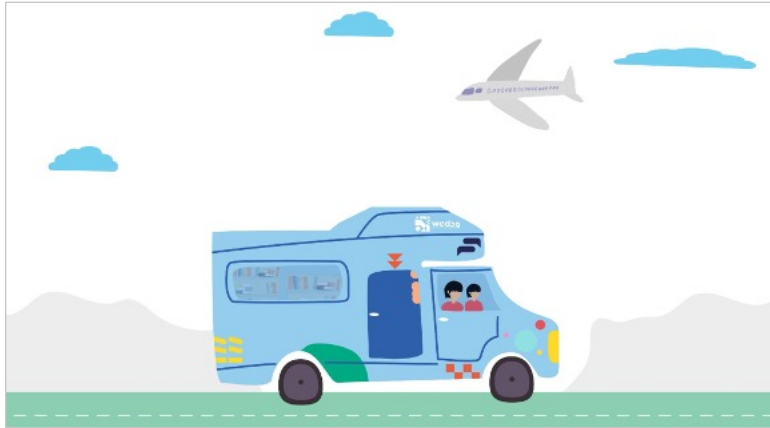
### Adventures on Wheels Tagline

#### Play Together, Learn Together

'Play Together, Learn Together' is an Imperative tagline. Imperative taglines usually begin with a verb and "command" users to take a specific action relevant to the brand's mission, impact, or product. The subtle assertiveness of this approach can bring authority, edginess, or attitude to your tagline.

"Together" is an important element of the recommended tagline and shows a clear distinction between independent play and play which involves others – a critical factor in social interaction and early childhood development.





## Adventures on Wheel Visual

### Campaign Overview

The integrated marketing campaign will drive awareness of the mobile units and drive footfall to each of the locations it /they visits.



## Public Relations ('PR')

PR activity would support the campaign by raising awareness and conversation around the Adventures on Wheels and the purpose behind it. PR activity could include:

- Launch press release with facts around the importance of play + locally relevant data related to play + learning
- Radio interviews and media bylines from key thought-leaders
- TV interviews on-ground at Adventure on Wheels locations to talk about the importance of social interaction in early childhood
- Media event – private event inviting key media to the mobile unit (located at the key media hubs e.g. twofour54 in Abu Dhabi) for them to learn more about the importance of social interaction as well as experience the activities and accompanying sample resources, and receive advice and guidance from key experts in early childhood education.

## Social Media

The official ECA social media channels, and their communities, would be leveraged to raise awareness of Adventures on Wheels, as well as follow and highlight the location of the units as they travel through the Emirate. Social media activity could include:

- Video and graphical social posts to raise awareness of the Mobile Units and its route
- Sharing photos of Adventures on Wheels in each community
- Social stories giving short video highlights of on-the-day activities to encourage footfall
- Facts on play + learning, to support the campaign key messages

## Website

A dedicated landing page would be created for people to learn more about Adventures on Wheels as well as access to useful resources. The website could include:

- Easy to understand information about the mobile units as well as tracking its route – where it's been, what it's done, and where it's going
- Calendar reminders for people to add to their phones to alert them when Adventures on Wheels is in, or coming soon, to their local community
- Showcase of the social media activity via a social feed, so that people can see the photos and videos of the mobile unit at its previous locations, to get a better understanding of what to expect
- On-page and downloadable resources (in multiple languages) to help parents and caregivers encourage purposeful play and activities to boost social interaction in the home, at school, and child-centric centers.
- Registration forms for users to access developmentally appropriate data and provide feedback and suggestions with respect to their use and experience of Adventures on Wheels.

## Advertising

The success of Adventures on Wheels will be from the awareness garnered and the footfall at each activation location. Advertising will be key to both driving maximum reach integrating local and community targeting and messaging.

The following advertising channels should be considered:

- Radio advertising
- Social media advertising and retargeting
- Digital advertising and retargeting
- Community advertising – lift posters, toilet door posters, community hall posters, flyers, taxi, RTA bus advertising, or local outdoor ads
- Parent Forums
- Mother and Baby Groups
- Nurseries and Schools
- Parent Coaches
- Pediatric Clinics

## Community Partnerships

Building partnerships within each of the proposed communities is also key to the success and positive reception of the mobile units in each community. Engaging with community leaders, particularly in regional areas, such as Al Dhafra, will encourage word of mouth, and drive footfall. Activities could include:

- Identify and engage with community advocates and groups – religious groups, parent and child groups, play centers
- Sharing of key information ahead of time
- Community specific (and language specific) webinars, ahead of Adventure on Wheels arrival, to drive awareness of the importance of social interaction and purposeful play
- Sharing marketing materials such as flyers and posters for online groups and community centers

## Advocates and Influencers

Generating advocacy around the purpose of the program is key. As part of the Adventures on Wheels campaign, influencers should be identified according to specific criteria before being considered as an appropriate campaign advocate. Influencers should be engaged with ahead of the campaign to generate awareness and throughout the campaign to generate footfall. Criteria should include:

- Influencers 'following – what does their following look like, are they local or international, do they appeal to the demographics of the target audiences
- Influencers 'existing content – have they discussed this or similar topics before, does the Adventures on Wheels campaign and purpose align with their previously shared content

- Influencer's influence – are they lauded for being an active part of the community (digital or physical), are they well respected, does what they say have meaning and impact
- Influencer's profile – do they have children, where do they live, what are their backgrounds etc.

## Events

Adventures on Wheels locations should be considered for their location and opportunity. Aligning with existing events will help to reach a wider audience and drive a higher footfall. For example, is there a specific community event, or bigger events which attract families, and which Adventures on Wheels can be a part of?

Upcoming relevant Abu Dhabi events include:

- Middle East Film, Comics and Games Con (March 2022)
- UAE National Day (2 December, annually)
- Emirati Women's Day (28 August, annually)
- Emirati Children's Day (15 March, annually)
- Mother of the Nation Festival (Q4 2021)
- Ed Ex MENA (Nov 2021)
- National Day events (December – annual)
- Christmas events (December – annual)
- Diwali events (October 2022)
- Eid events (April and May 2022)



## Output 4: Recommendations<sup>193, 202</sup>



### WED Team 3b – Recommendations



 <b>BRONZE STATUS</b> Little/ no additional support for ECA to promote social interaction/ play	 <b>SILVER STATUS   (Short Term)</b> Modest policies programme enhancements to promote social interaction and play	 <b>GOLD STATUS   Mid-Term</b> Additional policies programme actions to promote social interaction and child development	 <b>PLATINUM STATUS</b> Long-Term   Longer-term Desired activities to promote social interaction and early childhood development
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue to list parenting courses on ECA website</li> <li>2. Expand current offerings of ECA sponsored early childhood development courses and webinars that highlight the development of social skills for 0-8 years during everyday activities (offer incentives for attendance by one or both parents and/or extended family)</li> <li>3. Expand current certificate program for completion of ECA sponsored social skills development courses and webinars for early childhood educators, caregivers, and primary teachers (offer incentives to nurseries, preschools and primary schools for staff attendance)</li> <li>4. Conduct playful learning experiences (problem solving, cooperation, collaboration, etc.) as a component of all ECA staff meetings (face to face and virtual)</li> <li>5. Create playgrounds that are adapted for children of determination</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Craft Communication Campaign to promote Family Strengthening/ Play in Abu Dhabi- using existing resources (coordinate with public and private sectors, including parks developers,</li> <li>2. Present models of caregiver and educator preparation that promote the short- and long-term outcomes and wellbeing value of social skills development in the early years</li> <li>3. Produce short, simple talking head videos of key policy makers, ECA officials, and parents talking about the value of SI/Play. Add to ECA and govt websites. Other distribution ideas? Have high profile persons, such as, HHs deliver short messages about SI/Play.</li> <li>4. Develop pitch materials to get govt/policy folks interviewed about SI and the power of play on morning tv news shows and social media outlets</li> <li>5. Provide incentives, resources and technical support to early childhood programs that elect to embed social emotional skills development opportunities in their existing curriculum and staff development (partner with ADEK, MOE and KHDA). For example, nurseries and schools who follow innovative approaches and philosophies to play-based early childhood education (i.e., Montessori, Reggio Emilia).</li> <li>6. Develop implementation guidelines and self-study programs for early years settings that delineate objectives for foundational social skills development for 0-8 (partner with ADEK and ECE Higher ed)</li> <li>7. Develop and implement a Family Playgroup model for all children and families (include children of determination and their families) to interact socially in urban and rural areas (provide incentives for participation).</li> <li>8. Produce a reliable and quality-driven source for educators to access data on SI/ social skills development regularly in the form of a podcast/Instagram live/webinars/ Clubhouse talks etc. Use existing thought leaders in the technical committee and beyond</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create a Parenting/ or Nanny certification course (similar to Red Cross First Aid)- for nannies and/or for parents.</li> <li>2. Create mobile application linked to play/social interaction activities, including visits with children to parks- linked to prizes or discounts with participating businesses.</li> <li>3. Partner with the LEGO foundation or other play-oriented company to design and conduct research on the connection between play opportunities, social interaction and social skills development for wellbeing and future success for children in the UAE</li> <li>4. Obtain research and development resources (grants, or govt. Funding and researchers) to develop, conduct and disseminate the results of longitudinal studies (across cultures) of the effects of social skills development, social interaction opportunities and play-based curriculum models on children's wellbeing in the UAE. (Partner with ADEK &amp; UAE Higher Education)</li> <li>5. Partner with local city planners and developers to review existing landscape (apartments, villas, neighbourhood play spaces, parks, malls, etc.) and identify areas in need of resources and renovations to support increased social interaction opportunities for children and families in the UAE</li> <li>6. Provide rationale (based on research), propose incentives and obtain public support for the extension of national policies that provide employer and/or govt. Sponsored paid family leave (6-12 months)</li> <li>7. Partner with well-established businesses who are willing to support small businesses in adopting family friendly policies to have paid parental leave.</li> <li>8. Develop online application to allow Parents to interact with their children while away (at work, traveling, etc.), partner with telecommunication companies, IT companies, specialized departments at HE, and alike.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Implement paid m/paternal (Parental) leave- (6 months)</li> <li>2. Create a new tax on new developments, with the additional funding to support child care centres (nurseries)</li> <li>3. Develop core parenting support policies/entitlements for all parents in Abu Dhabi (including construction workers where children may reside outside UAE)</li> <li>4. Secure public support, funding and resources to assemble a working group of committed stakeholders to design and implement a "Decade of Play"/ "City of Play" campaign in Abu Dhabi (partner with anyone who wants to play.)</li> <li>5. ECA to consider longitudinal research (5,10, 20 years), to measure the impact of social interaction in children 0-8 years.</li> <li>6. There is a need and opportunity to develop a Middle East regional hub for ECD research and professional development. Abu Dhabi is positioned as an "academic" regional hub, hence it is recommended that the emirate lead not just within UAE, but also for the Middle East and fulfill their potential to serve as global leaders.</li> <li>7. Neighborhood child care centres (nurseries), family led playgroups and free developmental screening for 0-4 at local nurseries, as well as a mobile screening unit for regional areas</li> </ol>

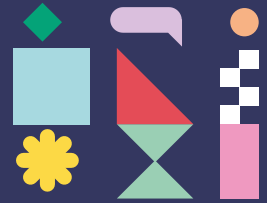


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Outputs 5 and 6 are set out in the Appendix.



## SECTION 6



### Intended Impact

<b>1</b>	<p>To impact:</p> <p><b>All children, Including Children of Determination 0-8 years of age</b></p>
<b>What To Note</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The recent COVID 19 global health pandemic shed light in Abu Dhabi and around the globe the importance of support to children and frontline workers who respond to their needs.</li> <li>Research and data, driven by interviews in Abu Dhabi and other UAE emirates, by the team, show that the social interaction skills have been affected. Help is required to enable catch-up.</li> </ul>
<b>Who Needs What</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children, parents, educators need an intentional process to develop social interaction skills and to plug any gaps within the wider development and wellbeing of children, 0-8 years.</li> </ul>
<b>Recommendation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Adventures on Wheels</b> and it's supporting, complimentary online systems will provide the educational community, children and families with suitable models for high standards of best practice(s).</li> <li>The team's report - <b>Stakeholder Voices</b> provides insight for ECA to understand the requirements of stakeholders within the Emirate.</li> </ul>
<b>Outcome</b>	<p>Enhanced Wellbeing in children 0-8 years   More Cohesive Family Units   Strengthened Relationships in the Home and Classroom</p>

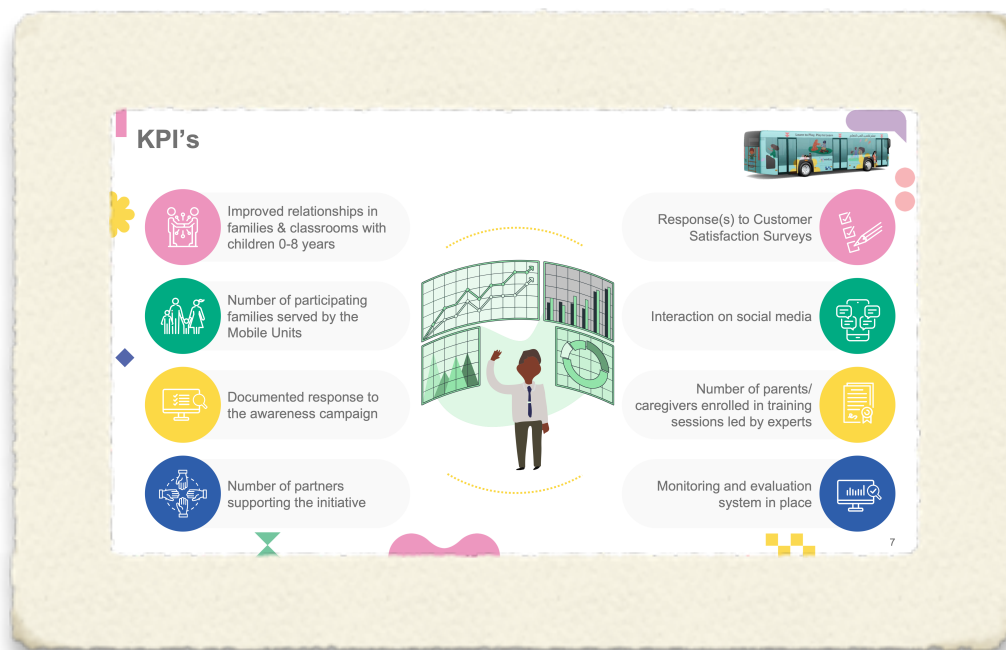
<b>2</b>	<p>To impact:</p> <p><b>Parents, Caregivers; Extended Families of All Children</b></p>
<b>What To Note</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When parents and carers are supported and empowered, they are more likely to engage in playful parenting and playful caring.</li> <li>The onset of Covid has brought significant challenges to social interactions within families.</li> <li>When parents are supported, children are taken care of<sup>1</sup>.</li> </ul>

Who Needs What	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents and families in Abu Dhabi need support to build playful nurturing relationships with children ages 0-8 years. They require tools and a road map for success.</li> <li>Parents and families need to understand <i>HOW</i> to engage with their children.</li> </ul>
Recommendation	Parents and families need to understand <i>HOW</i> their simply, routine interactions can support their child's growth and development. Offering <i>HOW</i> to engage with their children
Outcome	Wellbeing   Cohesive Family Units   Strengthened Relationships in the home   Socially-prepared citizens and residents for the future.

3	To impact stakeholders: <b>Early Childhood Educators and Leaders</b>
What To Note	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As with parents, educators in Abu Dhabi need support to build playful nurturing relationships with children ages 0-8 years. They require tools and a road map for success.</li> </ul>
Who Needs What	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>From stakeholder feedback, it is evident that educators would benefit from additional guidance and support with respect to building and enhancing social interaction skills within the classroom.</li> <li>Particular, additional, support is needed for children of determination.</li> <li>Educators expressed a requirement for professional development to improve existing provision when teaching social and emotional development.</li> </ul>
Recommendation	Based on the recognition of the importance of nurturing care and responsive caregiving, and that no single organization can create a new focus on social interaction alone, the creation of the WED Alliance for Children and Families would bring together public and private partners to collaborate differently and mobilize the funding required to deploy immediate and sustainable programs tailor-made to the social-emotional needs of young children. This will include up skilling educators and leaders.
Outcome	Wellbeing   Strengthened Relationships in the Classroom   Socially prepared citizens and residents for the future   Better Informed Professionals   Improved Teaching and Learning

4	To impact: <b>Education and Child Support Systems</b>
What To Note	Education and support systems are available within Abu Dhabi - ECA, ADEK, MOE
Who Needs What	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The existing government organizations will inspire political commitment and spearhead leadership from Abu Dhabi to the global development community to strengthen families and social interaction.</li> </ul>
Recommendation	As above, item 3 - the creation of the WED Alliance for Children and Families would bring together public and private partners to collaborate differently and mobilize the funding required to deploy immediate and sustainable programs tailor-made to the social-emotional needs of young children.
Outcome	Enhanced Wellbeing in Children 0-8 years   More Cohesive Family Units   Strengthened Relationships in the Home and Classroom   Socially prepared citizens and residents for the future   A much-needed collaborative, multi-sectoral approach allowing for one message to all of the key stakeholders.

## Key Performance Indicators Output 1: Adventures on Wheels



## Key Performance Indicators Output 2: WED Alliance for Children and Families



## Conclusion

Sustainability measures will be the key to the successful implementation of all outputs.



## Summary Matrix: Breakthrough Working Group 3b: Social Interaction

Social Interaction Topic	Summary Description	
<b>Key Topics</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Social Interaction benefits for wellbeing and long-term success for children 0-8</li> <li>2. Messaging about Social Interaction to the community and public</li> <li>3. Awareness of opportunities for Social Interaction for children 0-8 and their families</li> </ol>	
<b>Stakeholders</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Children</li> <li>2. Mothers (Younger, Older, rural/urban, migrant)</li> <li>3. Fathers (Younger, Older)</li> <li>4. Grandparents</li> <li>5. Extended family</li> <li>6. Caregivers/nannies</li> <li>7. Educators</li> <li>8. Schools</li> <li>9. Employers</li> <li>10. Administrators</li> <li>11. Media (print, social)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12. Health Care Providers</li> <li>13. Government agencies</li> <li>14. International/global ECD organizations</li> <li>15. ECA leadership and staff</li> <li>16. Investors</li> <li>17. Philanthropic organizations</li> <li>18. City planners/parks and recreation dept.</li> <li>19. Early Childhood researchers</li> <li>20. Early childhood product developers</li> </ol>
<b>Research Methods</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Interviews-general population</li> <li>2. Interviews-high level experts</li> <li>3. Surveys-parents</li> <li>4. Surveys-education community</li> <li>5. Email communication with early childhood, health care and research community</li> <li>6. Internet/web -based searches of social interaction initiatives</li> <li>7. Desk review of local, national, and global research on social interaction</li> <li>8. Thematic review of local, national, and global ECD initiatives</li> <li>9. Outreach to national and global entities that support sustainable projects for early childhood development</li> </ol>	
<b>Problems identified</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Insufficient paid family leave for new parents limits opportunities for bonding and social interaction</li> <li>2. Lack of affordable, high-quality childcare that offers social interaction opportunities</li> <li>3. Lack of accessible neighborhood “green” play spaces</li> <li>4. Overwhelming amount of unvetted resources and information on the internet</li> </ol>	

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>5. Untrained and unqualified domestic houseworkers provide majority of childcare for 0-4</li> <li>6. Conflicting and mixed messages about the value of social interaction in 0-8 educational settings</li> <li>7. Limited opportunities in primary grades for play-based learning and social interaction</li> <li>8. Lack of standard or national curriculum model for nurseries and preschools that supports play-based learning and social interaction</li> <li>9. Lack of DAP /ECD protocols for inspectors of nurseries, KGs, and primary grades, with respect to social skills development</li> <li>10. Lack of parent and community awareness of the depth and breadth of ECA resources and support</li> <li>11. Lack of regular developmental milestone screenings in nurseries or during well child checkups</li> <li>12. Lack of media/messaging about the value of social interaction as a critical element of well-being</li> <li>13. Insufficient parents' knowledge regarding the importance and ways of socially interacting with their children</li> <li>14. Lack of local and national funding streams for early childhood program development, nurseries, and professional/staff development</li> <li>15. Lack of cross-disciplinary communication and partnerships between health, education, and related business sectors</li> <li>16. Significant discrepancy about the use of digital games and apps as a part of children's activities (parents 28%; education administrators 13%)</li> <li>17. Significant percentage (42%) of educators surveyed believed that studying and homework should be part of 0-8 children's daily activity; compared to 21% of educational administrators surveyed.</li> <li>18. Educators surveyed in Abu Dhabi (36%) believed that parents spend less than 30 min. a day playing with their child; Educators in Al Ain (47%) and Al Dhafra (59%) believed parent-child play to be approx. one hour a day.</li> </ol>
<p><b>2 mains Outputs</b> (additional outputs 3, 4, 5, 6 are within section 5 and the Appendices)</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Adventures on Wheels</b> Transportable developmentally appropriate activities and "play and learn" events designed to model a range of social interaction opportunities for children aged 0-8 and their families in rural and urban neighborhoods. All mobile units will include a dynamic Communication Campaign to raise awareness of ECA early childhood development resources and promote evidence-based messaging about the link between social interaction, play-based learning, wellbeing, and long-term success.</li> <li>2. <b>WED Children and Families Alliance.</b> Establish a representative council of local policymakers, educators and business leaders who will solicit and manage local, national, and international sustainable funding (i.e., government mandated fees/taxes, employee benefits) that support children's well-being, social interaction, and related dynamic initiatives that support global early childhood development (i.e., grants, scholarships, awards).</li> </ol>

## Concluding Statements

“Team 3b recommends developing a strong communication campaign that illustrates social interaction as an essential component of children’s wellbeing. To initiate such a campaign, we propose the use of customized vehicles that offer social interaction adventures for families in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, at their doorsteps, and provide powerful messages from early childhood experts about the development of young children. This type of dynamic innovation can become a regional and global model for vetting and promoting information and resources, especially if funded collaboratively by partners who share similar visions for the future of children between the ages of 0-8 years and their families”.

**Karen Kelly**

*When families and educators listen to the stories that children tell through words, actions, gestures and expressions and when they hold these stories in mind by sharing, interpreting and documenting them; they find ways to help children master challenges and experience the joy of making and keeping friends<sup>168</sup>.*

"Most buses take children to school; **Adventures on Wheels** brings education to the community. Each vehicle will be equipped with all the resources, supplies and facilities needed to foster education across disciplines and encourage social interaction skills through practice.

The vehicles have the potential to change lives. Being able to simply walk out of your home and see a vehicle that's full of knowledge? That's hope on wheels."

**Alice Cahn**



*Play as an instrument for social development - “As urban populations grow and rural populations decline, there are too few designated spaces for real play that are free of cars and other obstacles.... city planners make play a low priority and fail to provide enough safe places for children to play. As in other areas of social provision, there is a need to tackle ‘the play deficit’ which cannot be allowed to slip off the agenda”. | Sir Ken Robinson<sup>147</sup>*

"Childhood is under attack from the media; from the education system, where schools push down primary school expectations to pre-primary. From parents/caregivers; parents who desire precocious children; from newer/innovative technology seeking children's attention. Parents and all frontline workers who support young children and their families need a deeper understanding and stronger competency in developmentally appropriate, social interaction rationale and approaches. **What, why, when, how.**"

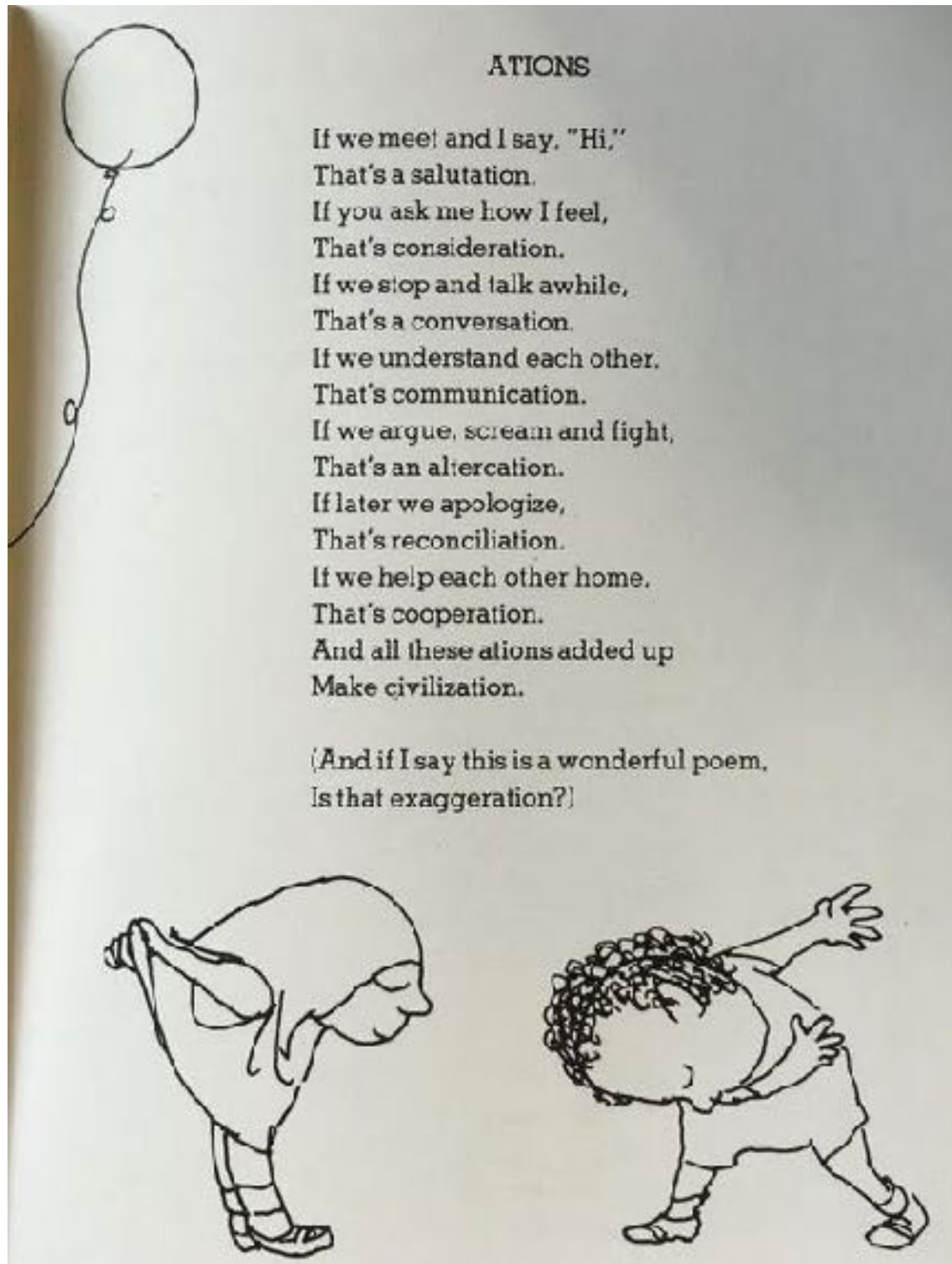
### **Pablo Stansbery**

Social interaction is important for young children. Having social experiences and interacting with others help young children learn, develop, and grow in a variety of ways, including language development, social awareness, emotional intelligence, physical development, self-esteem, and creativity. As early as infancy, social experiences and interactions are key for development. Team 3b realizes that not all families and children have equal access to opportunities of social interaction, therefore, creation of a partnership alliance and having a mobile unit full of adventures traveling to the doorstep of young children would be great help to provide opportunities to social interactions which can help develop important life skills.

### **Suha Mohammed Al Hassan**



## A Poem by Shel Silverstein on Social Interaction



# APPENDICES

## Output 1: Proposal Adventures on Wheels



هبة أبوظبي للطفولة المبكرة  
Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority

### WED Movement Proposal Adventures on Wheels



Prepared for: Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority ('ECA')

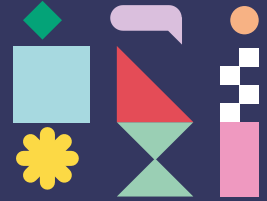
Prepared by: Team 3b | Social Interaction

30 September 2021

Proposal number: 001



# SECTION 1



## Introduction

Adventures on Wheels<sup>5</sup> will be a fleet of mobile units/vehicles. It is one of the team's outputs based on detailed analysis of the topic (social interaction), discussions, interviews with stakeholders in Abu Dhabi Emirate, surveys and additional secondary research. Adventures on Wheels (also referred to in this document as the 'mobile unit(s)'), will be a one-stop destination for children<sup>6</sup> and stakeholders within their ecosystem enabling, supporting and enhancing social interaction in culturally appropriate and engaging ways.



The mobile units are an initiative that could be used to advertise the ECA resources and showcase best practices in the early years for parents, caregivers, nannies, health care workers, the education community and product developers.

It will be set up with **Ramadan-style tents** to cater to an expected high number in terms of interest and use. Alternatively, temporary locations will be considered such as a pop-up in a mall. Or purpose built learning environments using a **3-D printed schools' technique**<sup>7</sup> to accompany the vehicles.

## Vision & Objectives

To impact families within Abu Dhabi with high quality resources, activities and advice enhancing social interaction in children 0-8 years, using purposeful play as a tool.

Objective: To develop a customized fleet of mobile play and learning vehicles (e.g. buses, double-decker buses, caravans, trolleys, RVs), staffed with early childhood educators and other experts, that will reach all children, 0-8 years and their families, where they are. Supporting children's individual learning styles and encouraging the practice of critical social interaction skills.

Objective: Impacting the social interaction skills and development of Children 0-8 years within the emirate of Abu Dhabi ('AD') United Arab Emirates ('UAE'). Taking the model from AD to the Gulf region and beyond.

<sup>6</sup> This is an inclusive term and necessarily includes children of determination.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/exclusive-look-worlds-first-3-d-printed-school>

## Context

According to the Abu Dhabi Statistics Center, the estimated population of the emirate, mid-2016, was 2,908,173 (comprising 1,857,618 males and 1,050,555 females). 551,535 were UAE nationals and 2,356,638 were expatriates. The average annual population growth rate for the years from 2010 to 2016 was 5.6 per cent.

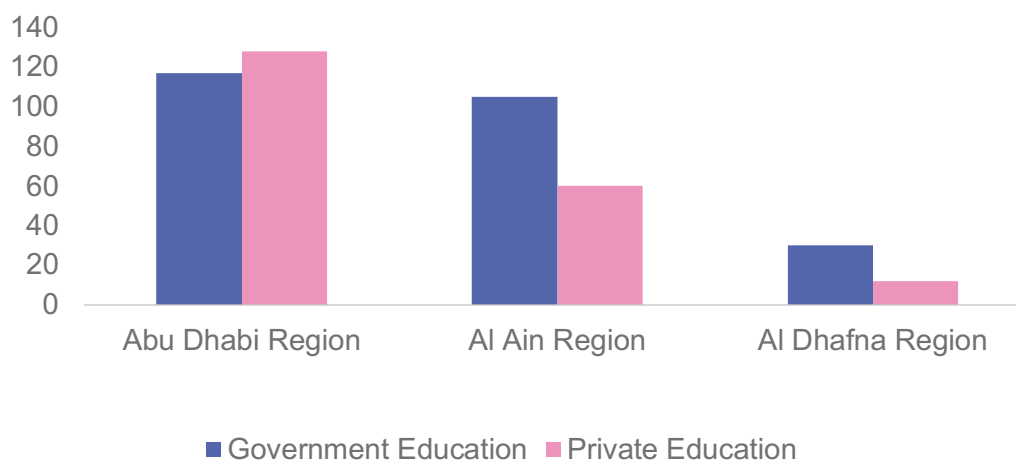
The emirate of Abu Dhabi lies on the coast of the Arabian Gulf and is bordered by the Sultanate of Oman to the east, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the south and the west and the emirate of Dubai to the northeast. The three main regions of the emirate are:

- The city of Abu Dhabi
- Al Ain in the east
- Al Dhafra (earlier known as Al Gharbia) in the west

Social development in Abu Dhabi represents a significant objective and driving motivation behind policies and initiatives pursued by the Abu Dhabi government. Key elements of the emirate's vision for the social development describe a society characterized by the provision of world- class healthcare, education and other services that lead to a safe and secure society and the preservation of cultural heritage of Abu Dhabi, where individuals are valued and their unique skills and contributions are ethically leveraged toward achieving a better quality of life for all<sup>8</sup>.

The significantly lower access to education in the Al Dhafra region (see table below) and the voices of the stakeholders in Abu Dhabi, are the main reasons for the Adventures on Wheels initiative.

**Figure 4.1.1 Number of Schools by Region and Sector, 2018-19**



Source: Statistics Centre - Abu Dhabi. Department of Education and Knowledge  
Data from Statistical Yearbook of Abu Dhabi, 2020

<sup>8</sup> Statistical Yearbook of D 2020 |

[https://www.scad.gov.ae/Release%20Documents/Statistical%20Yearbook%20of%20Abu%20Dhabi\\_2020\\_Annual\\_Yearly\\_en.pdf](https://www.scad.gov.ae/Release%20Documents/Statistical%20Yearbook%20of%20Abu%20Dhabi_2020_Annual_Yearly_en.pdf)

## Theoretical Framework

Early childhood is a critical period in a child's social, cognitive, linguistic, emotional, and self-regulatory development. Extensive research has been conducted on children's overall developmental processes, influencing factors, and their lifelong impacts.

Research suggests the overarching significance of supporting children's early development through caregiver-child communication, social interactions, and play. Such interactions and opportunities for development in children's early years are **critical for later success in life and overall well-being**.

Moreover, the positive long-term effects of high-quality early childhood education (ECE), on children's development, as well as the economic, social, and cultural development of communities on a larger scale, have been extensively documented.

To sustain high-quality provision, it is recommended that the mobile units have a chosen and well-designed curriculum framework to engage families and communities, ensuring they are involved and have access to its goals and principles. In this way activities, tools and resourceful teaching and play methods can be adapted and used within the home environment. Only qualified and experienced staff will set the pace for such learning.

In the Arab Gulf region, especially in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), little research has been done to document and analyze ECE quality, practices, and its impact. Some studies show extreme variations in the quality of early childhood education centers (ECECs) in the emirate of Abu Dhabi. This highlights the need to improve ECE policies, practices, and facilities by adopting recognized international standards, best practices, and support structures. An additional challenge is very low school enrollment rates, in parts of the emirate<sup>9</sup>.

Buses, vans, wagons, public transport—recognizable everywhere—transport more than 46% of children to school every day in the UAE. But how might similar vehicles provide more than just a ride to school? By repurposing available space and capitalizing on mobility, traveling science labs, language workshops, art studios, libraries, gyms, cooking classes and cafeterias can reduce barriers to access by meeting children, and the adults who care for them, where they are.

An added perspective will come from considering the concept of transforming the interior of vehicles into an **IMAX-style experience** showing engaging age-appropriate educational films and documentaries, aimed at **six- to eight-year-olds**. They can be used as a prompt for learning conversations between children and educators; between children and parents; and between children as peers.

It is suggested that ECA partner with high quality nurseries that provide regularly scheduled ECCE/ECD family strengthening events in local parks, malls, and even in the desert.

Activities will include **play-based learning**, literacy, interactive games that need no special materials or equipment, etc. **Modeling purposeful play** with the use of loose parts, natural resources and

<sup>9</sup> Scan of Abu Dhabi's Early Childhood Services and Resources, ECA, 2020

easy-to-set-up **Montessori Practical Life** and **Sensory** resources will be key to developing social interaction, linked to language development.

Working parents could ask **nannies** to accompany children to the neighborhood event or preschool sessions and stay and learn. Sessions could be offered in the early evenings, during the weekends or online, for working parents. Granted this may not meet the need for consistent nursery services, where parents are active partners, but it could be a way to raise community and parent awareness of child development, wellbeing, social interaction and so much more. It is hoped that eventually all areas in the emirate will be served by quality nurseries with adequately trained and experienced staff, providing education in Arabic and English.

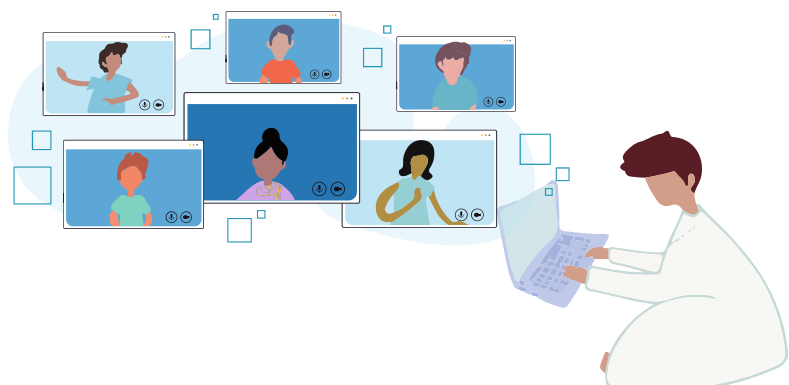
**Scaling-up** is certainly something that needs consideration. Team 3b imagined an entire fleet of mobile units (RVs, self-driving vans, trolleys, caravans, busses, etc.) and perhaps eventually a monorail system for ECD like the monorail at Palm Jumeirah, Dubai<sup>10</sup>.

Ease of access will encourage more frequent play and practice; with the activities encouraging children to experiment with a range of subjects while collaborating, cooperating and socially interacting with their peers, parents, wider family and teachers.

The criteria for approval of any mobile unit should include accessibility for all, necessarily catering to **children and people of determination**. Cultural and language considerations should also apply.

These mobile units will ensure - well-planned logistics, safety, trust, health and wellbeing, emotional needs and social interaction opportunities.

The main reason to consider a collaborative partnership between the education community and businesses is that the messaging will be evidence based, consistent and family friendly. The future of children requires the **whole community** to be involved and focused on similar goals. It is recommended that Adventures on Wheels may be funded by the team's other output – WED Alliance for Children and Families.



<sup>10</sup> <https://www.palmmonorail.com>



## Play as a Tool of Social Interaction

Definitions for play have been taken from several sources, including feedback from children themselves, parents, grandparents, both in Abu Dhabi and beyond.

### Quote from parent:



***“By playing, my child learns to communicate, cooperate with others, learns to respect others, learns rules, adopts new knowledge about things and expands his vocabulary”.***

For children, play has been defined as the first and most natural environment for all learning. Social behavior and by extension, social interaction, is best learned in the company of others. ‘Where children can experience themselves in the context of spontaneous social activity and relationships, learn how their behavior affects others, practice seeing things from another child’s point of view and learn how to get along with others’<sup>16</sup>.



***“My name is Paula. I’m 4 years old. Play is to have fun and enjoying with your friends or yourself, your favourite toys, dolls and babies. It is extremely important to children so they will not be bored.”***

Learning environments are built on ‘playful interaction’ and pragmatic experiences where children can explore, create, and make learning happen. The *process* and not the outcome is essential for children, parents and educators, alike. Cultures that encourage children to play, recognize the significance of play for a child’s wellbeing. In Finland, play-based teaching is a core competency and value of early childhood education.

### Quote from a child:



***“My name is Lucija. Play is important so I can develop and grow up. My mother and father are playing with me. Everyone can play. Even grandmothers and grandfathers can play”.***

## Children of Determination & Play

There is a unique opportunity for ECA to continue to highlight inclusive practices. See ‘*Green Spaces, Outdoor Places for Purposeful Play*’ below in Section 2.

## Ideas and Concepts

### National and Global Examples of Mobile Vehicles

1. In 2015, The **Emirates Foundation Mobile Bus** travelled to the Taweya exhibition in Sharjah and received more than 700 visitors. **Financial literacy** workshops were delivered to students from all ages and more than 35 schools visited the bus.

The Mobile Bus was also stationed outside the main entrance of **Marina Mall, Abu Dhabi** where students started visiting the bus and explored the information material inside. Fun educational activities took place during the workshops, including quizzes on financial literacy topics such as savings, budgeting and investing.

Inclusion is at the heart of what the Emirates Foundation exemplifies. Global Money Week reached out to friends at the Al Noor Centre for Special Needs. Fun-filled activities were conducted for **students of determination** from the center. Children were introduced to the bus and then spent an hour familiarizing themselves with the audio-visual aids on board.

The tablets in the bus, had fun and educational games which kept the children engaged for the first half of the session. This was followed up with a savings activity in which the Emirates Foundation customized savings mugs, were distributed to all the students. Students were taught how the mugs were to be used, understanding the importance of saving and all the great things that could be bought with savings.

2. **Mobile Library** Dubai International Children’s Book Fair<sup>11</sup>

The Mobile Library is an ambulant celebration of culture. Seen as such, it is designed to appeal to different users and age groups with an emphasis on children, inciting their interest in book reading and literature. In addition to this, the library can house fun activities like book reading sessions, TV viewing, music listening and cinema projection.

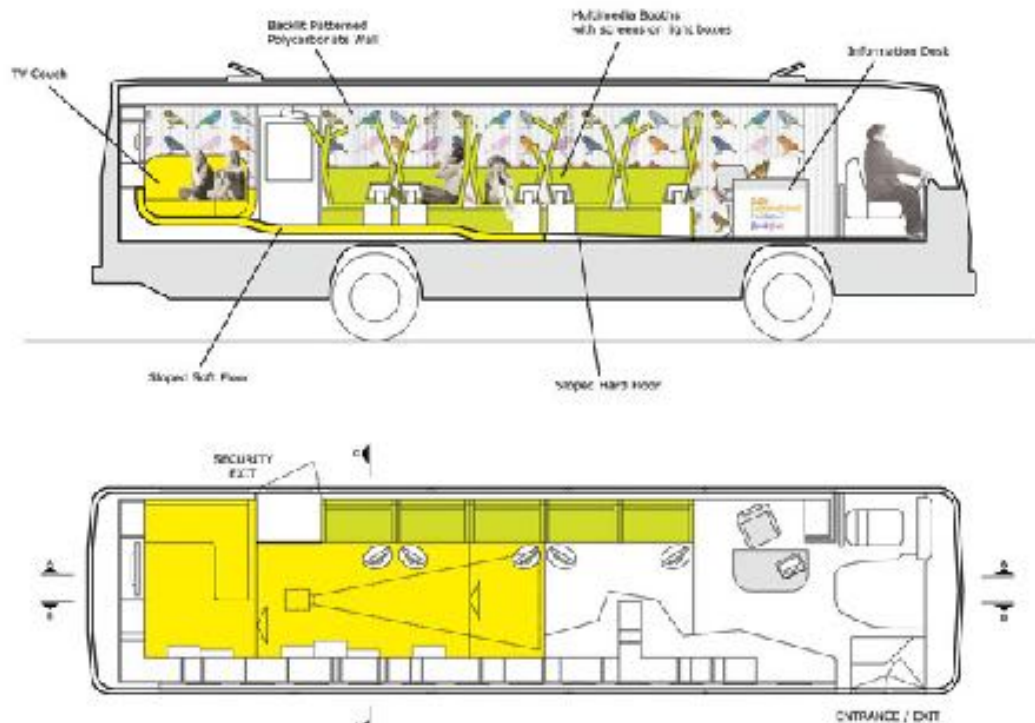
The Teen/Adult area is designed for book borrowing and multimedia content browsing. It also serves as a meeting point with parents and educators.

The kids area is more of a soft playground where kids are invited to meet, play and learn in a relaxed uncoded space.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.minus5architects.com/Dubai-Mobile-Library>



Dubai  
International  
Children's  
Book Fair



### Type

Conversion



### Client

Dubai International Children's  
Book Festival / Maktoum Foundation



### Bus dimensions

11m x 2.4m

3. **'Schools on Wheel'**, run by an NGO, helps children learn amid Covid-19

Read more At: <https://www.aninews.in/news/national/general-news/schools-on-wheel-run-by-ngo-help-children-learn-amid-covid-1920210810231923/>

4. **Climb Aboard:** School Buses Reimagined

Mobile greenhouses, art studios, and **maker spaces** are traveling to underserved kids across the nation—salvaging vulnerable school programs and **leveling the playing field to access**.

<https://www.edutopia.org/article/climb-aboard-school-buses-reimagined-emelina-minero>

## 5. GMW Bus **Delivering Financial Literacy Workshops**

<https://globalmoneyweek.org/index.php/gmw-bus-delivering-financial-literacy-workshops>

A GMW bus that can tour through a country and reach children and youth in rural areas, too! The buses can have learning facilities to teach youngsters about money and savings, such as computers with financial games, books, and brochures. This can be adapted.

## 6. **Money School on Wheels** in Romania GMW2018

Banca Comerciala Romana organized multiple events with its partners attempting to teach the youth about creating a budget, differentiating between needs and wants, and saving for the future. **Money School on Wheels**, was a truck adapted to function as a financial literacy exhibition, offered workshops for children aged 7-14 on financial topics.

## 7. **Educational caravans** toured in Macedonia during GMW2017

The GMW in Macedonia was celebrated across three days with organized educational caravans using educational buses. Five regulators along with partners - Alliance of Microfinance Organizations, Bureau for Development of Education, and Stock Exchange reached 3000 children and youth through **financial literacy** awareness sessions and **educational** visits in the cities of Veles and Negotino and later in the Tetovo and Gostivar, Ohrid and Struga.

## 8. **Schools reached by a federal truck** in Belgium during GMW2016

For **Global Money Week** 2016, Belgium organized a federal truck that crisscrossed the entire country stopping at various schools. During the visit, pupils played the budget game in the Federal Truck and could also leave messages in the chatterbox.

## 9. *Saudi Arabia* upgraded their mobile caravan to a **high-tech financial literacy bus** for GMW2014

During GMW2014, the Saudi Capital Markets authority had just finished the final touches in the smart investor bus as a replacement to a mobile caravan. The Capital Markets Authority used the bus in the “smart investor” tours around the kingdom during holidays, festivals, outdoor activities and in public parks and malls. The bus included TV screens to show programs, ATM touch screens, stands and public touch screens including all the financial literacy program materials.

## 10. **Mobile classroom** in *Colombia* during GMW2014

During Global Money Week 2014, the younger children of Colombia had fun learning about savings in a mobile classroom. They rode around the city in a bus making their own their own plastic saving banks.



## Monitoring & Framework

A clear framework is essential to guide monitoring and evaluation. A framework will explain how the mobile vehicle is supposed to work by laying out the components of the initiative and the order or the steps required to achieve the desired results.

### Why are monitoring and evaluation frameworks important?

A well thought out monitoring and evaluation framework will assist greatly with thinking through strategies, objectives and planned activities, and whether they are indeed the most appropriate ones to implement.

It increases understanding of the goals and objectives of Adventures on Wheels, defining the relationships between factors key to implementation, and articulating the internal and external elements that could affect its success.

### Monitoring and evaluation framework for Adventures on Wheels will:

- Assist in understanding and analyzing the initiative of the mobile unit
- Help to develop sound monitoring and evaluation plans and implementation of monitoring and evaluation activities
- Articulate initial goals and measure short, medium and long-term objectives
- Define relationships among inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts
- Clarify the relationship between initial activities and external factors
- Demonstrate how activities will lead to desired outcomes and impacts



## Audience

### Multiple Audience

1. All children, including children of determination, from conception to 8 years of age.
2. Parents, all adults who care for children; extended families of all children as defined in (1) above.
3. Professionals within the field of early childhood education and care.
4. Government entities; policy makers; that influence early childhood development within Abu Dhabi emirate.
5. Health care specialists that work with children and families.
6. UAE business community.
7. UAE's creative community; mobile (tech and transportation) experts; relevant NGOs; government and private entities.



#### Target Age Group

0-8 years



#### Gender

Female and Male



#### Income/ Social Status

Open to all income levels regardless of socio-economic background



#### Employment status

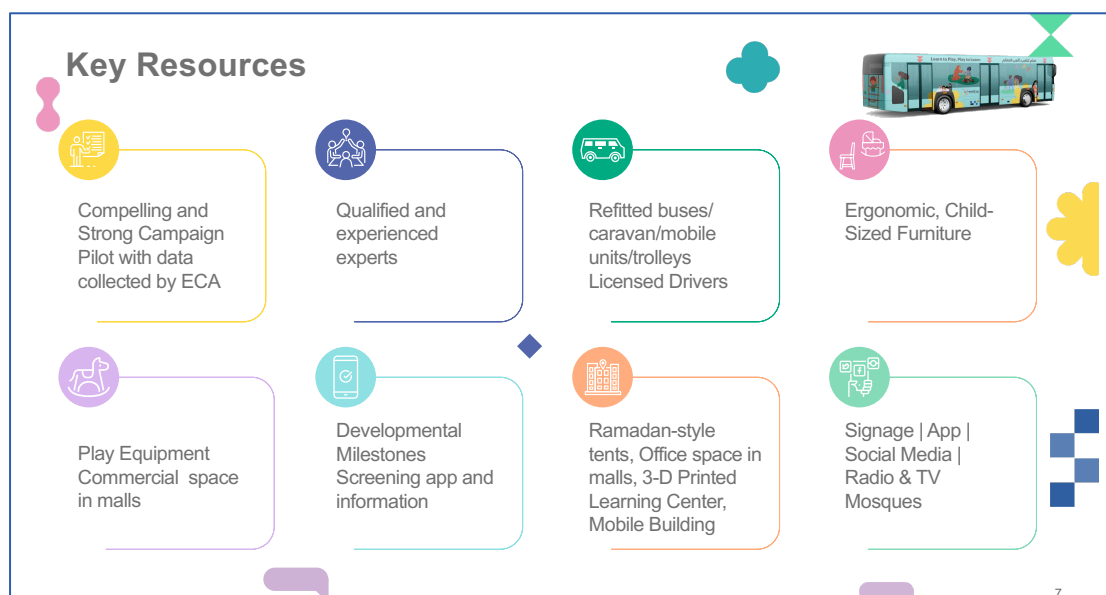
Open to all professions, regardless of employment status



#### Education

Open to all levels of education

## Implementation Resources



Key Partners	
Abu Dhabi Transport' Mawaqif	Youth advocates & Influencers
ECA & ADEK	Fitness instructors
Nurseries & Schools (international. Public, chartered)	Tent makers
Ministry of Education	Website designers
Zayed Higher Organization for People of Determination	Sign Language Interpreters
General Authority of Islamic Affairs and Endowments	Designers for bus/caravan remodeling
Department of Health   Pediatricians   Nurses	Translators
AUH Municipality	Car/Truck/Van dealerships (Bentley, Lamborghini, Ferrari, Rolls-Royce)
Qualified ECE educators	Utilities (Etisalat, DU, DEWA, TAQA, ADP Power)
ECD trainers	Airlines (Etihad,)
Museums	Hotels, Resorts
Researchers/University faculty	Real Estate (e.g. Al Dar Properties)
Bookstores/Resource Providers	

### Potential Public-Private Partnerships:

1. ECA/ADEK
2. High Quality Nurseries
3. Businesses or local vehicle suppliers
4. City Planning Department
5. Parks and Recreation
6. Health care professionals,
7. Zayed Higher Organizations
8. Higher Education Institutions
9. Telecommunication companies - Etisalat/Du
10. Magazine companies (digital) or app makers to provide subscription-based reliable data about social interaction and the other three WED topics (at low or no cost); information that's relevant, starting from second or third trimester.

## Overview of Partners Responsibilities

1. The **ECA** is responsible for the overall project, selecting nurseries (based on ADEK approval), providing guidelines for nurseries to develop appropriate activities and events, advertising/marketing/monitoring and data collection and reporting.
2. Selected high-quality, outstanding **nurseries** are provided funding (grants) to work alongside ECA and hire and train staff for the play mobiles, advertise and manage the schedules and the events, playgroup/preschool sessions, parent training, nanny “play and learn “activities, documentation of results.
3. **Businesses** either sponsor or receive funding (grants from the team’s WED Alliance concept) to provide the vehicles, licensed drivers, maintenance, registration and licensing, safety checks, fuel and customization (with design input from ECA).
4. **Municipalities** and (may be police) provide zoning approval, scheduling and locations, regulations and guidance for all events and activities linked to Adventures on Wheels.
5. **Department of Health/Health Care providers** provide staff for developmental assessment to children to detect any delays that could interfere with children’s ability to social interaction and, thus, provide early intervention services to address social skills among other developmental milestone (looking to the child as a whole).
6. **Zayed Higher Organizations (ZHO)** provide services aiming at promoting social skills for children with determination and their families.
7. **Higher Education Institutions** provide student volunteers majoring in (ECD) related fields to conduct research.
8. **Mobile educational initiatives already run in UAE** (Abu Dhabi, Sharjah and Dubai). Will benefit from the experience and lessons learned, in addition, to collaboration in terms of shared activities that promote social interaction. The team interviewed the Senior Specialist Childhood and Youth from the Abu Dhabi Department of Community Development and confirmed that existing initiatives exist in Abu Dhabi. However, nothing has been done that is linked to early childhood development/social interaction.

This will be a collaborative, multi-sectoral, effort, and one that will need coordination and high level “drivers” for the project to ever materialize. The basis of this effort will be a strong campaign to raise awareness.





## Impact

1. Partnerships are formed with relevant entities and businesses in Abu Dhabi.
2. All children (including children with determination) in Abu Dhabi emirate will have access to social interaction opportunities through various kinds of play.
3. Parents and caregivers will receive specialized training related to promoting social interaction with children through purposeful play.
4. Underserved/remote communities are served with opportunities for social interaction through purposeful play.
5. Improved social and cognitive outcomes for children within the targeted age range.
6. Impact positively on children's parents and wider family when it comes to social interaction, enhancing relationships.
7. Improved access to preschool experiences for children in families who are not accessing nurseries.

## Measuring Success

1. Documented response to the awareness campaign.
2. Number of participating parents and children.
3. Number of areas and communities that are served by Adventures on Wheels.
4. Number of partners that are involved in supporting this initiative.
5. Response(s) to Customer Satisfaction Surveys (social validity).
6. Number of views and interaction on social media.
7. Well-organized operation system for vehicles in place/No disruption of service.
8. Number of parents/caregivers enrolled in training sessions led by experts.
9. Monitoring and evaluation system in place.
10. Conduct longitudinal studies to monitor and measure social interaction and social and emotional learning in children 0-8 years.

## Scientific-Based Evidence backing the Output

1. Focus on evidence-based content that demonstrates how an early focus on social interaction and social skills leads to competence and confidence throughout children's lives.
2. While this has never been done nationwide, our model is the current educational and social success with localized mobile units.<sup>12</sup>



<sup>12</sup><https://www.edutopia.org/article/climb-aboard-school-buses-reimagined-emelina-minero>

## Recommended Schedule

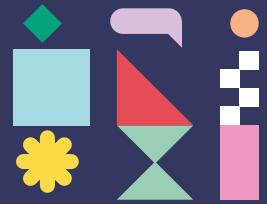
1. Start with a strong awareness campaign to build trust within the community.

### Key Messages of awareness campaign

- *Adventures on Wheels are free (or low cost), fun and focused on evidence-based social skills.*
  - *Adventures on Wheels are easily accessible by all UAE's citizens and residents; and support parents/educators' goals to help children succeed and learn.*
  - *Play is the work of childhood; children learn crucial social, academic and workplace skills through purposeful play and practice.*
  - *Play promotes critical social interaction skills that impact all aspects of children's development that is crucial to future success in life.*
  - *Inspiration for messaging:*  
[https://www.ted.com/talks/molly\\_wright\\_how\\_every\\_child\\_can\\_thrive\\_by\\_five?utm\\_source=linkedin.com&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_campaign=tedsread](https://www.ted.com/talks/molly_wright_how_every_child_can_thrive_by_five?utm_source=linkedin.com&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=tedsread)
2. Ensure that a **website and/or application** is available for stakeholders to explore the concept, providing them with an option to ask questions and contribute to the development of the units. Children will be key to this process.
  3. Staff will be **multi-lingual** and **people of determination** will be employed.
  4. Start with a **model in key areas**; 1-2 vehicles be outfitted to start, based on relevant market research. For example, the pilot phase for the Mobile Unit could be one or two units, partnered with one or two nurseries/business sponsors- and then gradually add units toward a full fleet, bearing in mind that each phase is more refined, based on monitoring data and resources.
  5. One mobile unit travels amongst those farthest from comprehensive Early Childhood Development (ECD) services, the most underserved populations of children, parents, caregivers and educators; one bus travel amongst an urban area. At a later stage, one bus travel in a suburban area (decisions based on essential market research).
  6. In that way, we can accurately research the challenges and successes with key populations and determine what changes need to be made in terms of content, activities, and outreach.
  7. Needs assessment to be conducted to determine the different requirements of the different communities intended to be served.
  8. Services are provided by educators, health practitioners, special educators, and many specialized and integrated services aiming at promoting social interaction. It is pivotal that a multi-sectoral, inter-governmental approach is taken.



## SECTION 2



### Implementable Program| Output Conception Details

#### Introduction

1. It is expected that the mobile unit(s) will travel to communities and remote areas within the Abu Dhabi emirate and provide opportunities to children and their families to promote social interaction through a full range of activities.
2. Nurseries, preschools and schools that were rated outstanding (by ADEK) will, possibly receive renewable government grants to support an early childhood teacher and assistant to manage the schedule and curriculum. Alternatively, ECA could hire their own team of qualified staff.
3. Approval would require partnership with a local business that would provide the vehicle (bus, trolley, train car(s) truck, van, RV, airstream, etc.), as well as a driver (inexpensive in the UAE), inspections, registration, maintenance, and fuel.
4. Preschools and businesses would use their marketing and advertising budgets to support the activities and resources needed. There will also be scope for employees from private companies to support the venture as part of any corporate social responsibility ('CSR') initiatives.
5. Approval will be given by the various cities for the limited use of safe, public spaces for parking the vehicle. Children will only be transported by their parents/caregivers, thus avoiding any issues with insurance and safety.
6. Preschools (as partners) could offer weekly playgroups where a nanny, parent, older sibling, or grandparent would be required to attend, thus increasing awareness of play-based learning, child development and social interaction.
7. Sessions could be arranged for early evening so that working parents are able to attend. Sessions can be recorded so that absent parents will not miss out. Nursery director/principals could monitor the activities.
8. Adults/ vetted volunteers would provide support for teachers involved in social activities that are modeled by the staff. Therefore, required child-staff ratio would not be an issue.
9. The ECA, in collaboration with ADEK, would approve, monitor (collect data) and support all mobile preschools, including recommending specific neighborhoods for maximum engagement of families. The ECA website would be visible on all vehicles.
10. All sessions would be no-cost; low cost or could accept voluntary contributions.
11. Rural/regional areas with minimal access to early childhood care and education services would be prioritized for mobile sessions.

12. Colorful vehicles—recognizable anywhere.
13. By repurposing available space and capitalizing on mobility, these traveling art studios, cafeterias, science labs, and much more will reduce barriers to access and meeting children and caregivers where they are to promote social interaction.
14. The mobile unit(s) could provide specialized training to parents/nannies/caregivers on matters pertaining to promoting social interaction and other holistic topics for development.
15. The mobile unit(s) could change themes periodically, (like museums), to ensure that families return. For example, themed units could focus on:
  - 1) Age-appropriate games
  - 2) Books and reading - various genres in Arabic, English, Urdu, Tagalog, Hindi
  - 3) Gardening as a hands-on learning experience; easy to set up in apartments too using plant pots (a great way to stimulate interaction and teach practical skills, as well as build in science learning)
  - 4) Nutrition
  - 5) **‘Train Your Nanny’** - a series of vignettes and videos modeling appropriate child development in the home, with tools and models for good care
  - 6) **‘How to Create a Purposeful Play Box’** - interactive training sessions for creating boxes from locally sourced and culturally relevant products for families with children as young as 0-3 years. It would be a great way to infuse lots of information and activities about child development and social interaction in a play-based setting (home, childcare, nanny-led), regularly, without being overwhelming. Perhaps a similar product for small play groups, led by parents, would be a way to bring families together to engage in social interaction and play based learning, and lend support to each other in the process<sup>13</sup>.
  - 7) Libraries and recreational centers work with ECA to provide activities, while the units supply healthy snacks/meals funded by partners. Serving food at community sites and activities is a sure way to build a sustainable, social model.
  - 8) Attributes of the mobile units - will never move with children on board; Fully Climate Controlled; supported by developmentally appropriate technology; will be used to collect data.
  - 9) Partnering with health provider(s) particularly pediatricians who will already have an existing relationship with families. Mobile unit(s) can include health professionals to provide trusted, high-quality developmental assessment to children who may not have the access or opportunity to such services to detect any delays in social skills development and provide early intervention. These robust systems will have to be in place at least one year before the first mobile unit starts operation.

<sup>13</sup> <https://tickikids.com/blog/67-the-uae-s-best-development-kits-for-kids/> | <http://learntoplay.org/campaigns/playgroup-in-a-box/> | <https://monkibox.com/>

## Suggested Training Titles:

1. Promoting Positive Social and Emotional Development in Children'
2. 'Building Prosocial Behavior in Children 2 to 4 Years'
3. 'Dealing with Temper Tantrums and Challenging Behavior by Preschoolers'
4. 'Rules for Establishing Happy Friendships in Early Childhood'
5. 'Developing Self Esteem and Self Awareness in Children'
6. 'Purposeful Play as a Tool for Happy Families'

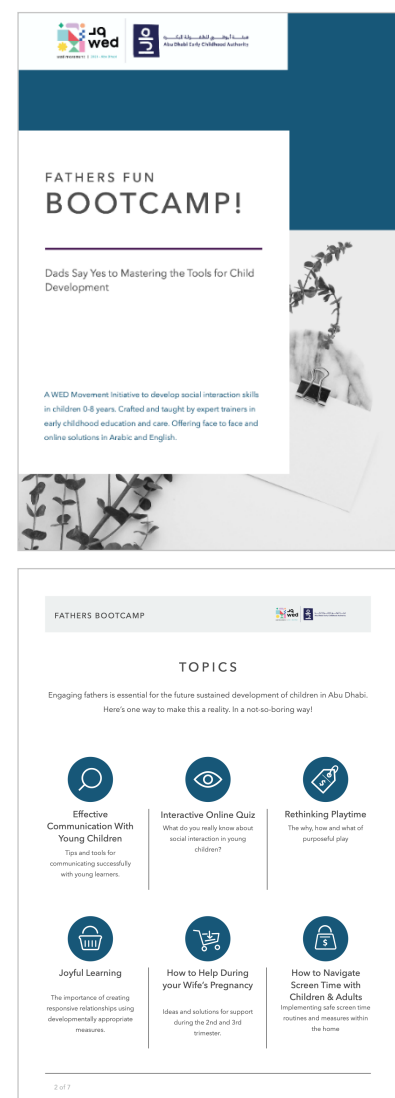
## Suggested Activities

### 1. FATHERS BOOTCAMP

Establishing an on and off-line bootcamp for fathers of children between the ages of 0-8 years of age. The emphasis will be on attracting fathers to a safe and relatable space where they feel comfortable to learn about early childhood development, ask questions and receive hands-on, practical tools and ideas for engaging with their children. Mothers and children will not be excluded. It could take the form of a membership-based bootcamp, for those who are able to contribute. However, there will also be free resources and training available for all, to ensure easy access to the **whole** community, including mothers, grandparents and siblings of children.

The bootcamp will be operated by qualified and experienced experts in early childhood education, pediatrics and child psychology, enabling a **multi-sectoral approach** for maximum impact. The interactive website will have detailed information including articles, games, references, books for purchase and other recommended activities.

There will also be links to relevant support for developmental screening and assessments. The website will have recommended story books such as "*Hike*" by Peter Oswald (Ages 4 to 8); a story about a father and child who head out from home for a hike in the mountains. Also, stories promoting AE **Emirati children's authors** such as "*Kameel's Little Secret*" by Hassan Al Marashi<sup>22</sup>.



## 2. STEAM/MAKER SPACES

A STEAM activity would focus on science, technology, engineering, arts, and math. Featured tools could include 3D printers, virtual reality glasses, and little Bits, a type of electronic building block.

Onboard/off board lessons can be tailored to what children are learning at home and in the classroom. For instance, when 8-year-old students are studying the amplitude and frequency of sound waves, they can create sound waves on the bus using little Bits.

Or when 6- and 7-year-olds are studying poetry, children can learn to write code that pilots the robots they have built to act out student-created poems.

Children will be able to interact with one another, create and explore.



For the STEAM bus: “There’s not a day that goes by on the mobile bus that you don’t see total engagement from the kids,” said US-based educator Craig Adams, a STEAM coordinator who also drives a STEAM bus. “Anybody can do this. Our buses hold 25 people at a time and in a school year, serve over 5,000 students. It is cost effective for our school district.”

## 3. ART CONCEPT

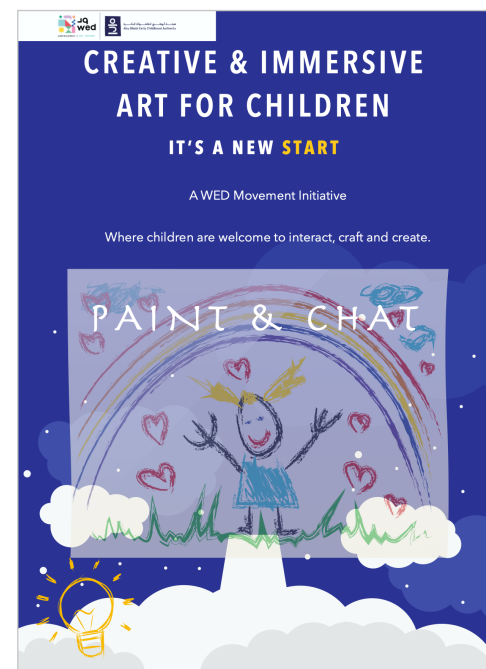
In Eugene, Oregon, USA a partnership between the city's Parks and Recreation department and a local company that brings free arts education to young people, resulted in the creation of the River Road Park Imagination Bus, now known to everyone as ‘Artie’. Artists provide free classes for children who don’t have the transportation or means to pay for art classes.

As Covid drove school closings and distance learning, the art became critical. Crisis breeds creativity—creativity that can lead to vital discoveries.

Sir Isaac Newton first mulled over the Law of Gravity when on his own self-isolation during the Bubonic Plague.

The invention of Scotch tape was born out of the Great Depression to repair, rather than throw away broken and torn goods. Creativity is a vital ingredient in innovation.

It is expected that the Abu Dhabi Mobile Unit will utilize art to support wellness and help bridge the disconnect of social distancing.



Mobile Art-focused vehicles can include low-tech supplies such as musical instruments, paint, paper, crayons, chalk and other age-appropriate art supplies, as well as the expertise of professionals in their respective art fields. This could include an art therapist. Also available, could be technology that allows young children to create and share music, dance, and other artworks they have created thus increasing their social, as well as creative, skills.

#### Examples include:

- Creating video lessons with students on the bus, that allow them to sing or play along with friends, siblings and family members at home.
- Collaborative recording projects using online platforms or apps like Acapella. Acapella lets users record, synchronize and share songs.
- Online galleries created by children on the bus can be shared for others to comment on and be inspired by (Padlet or Google Jamboard).
- Use of Flip Grids to upload young children performing their own choreographed dances.

**Note:** Research shows that trauma impacts not only life but learning; and that a child who is under stress cannot achieve their highest potential. The arts combat both stress and trauma by enhancing positive emotions, building social connections, and providing nonverbal means of communication.

#### 4. NUTRITION CONCEPT

This concept could be a joint approach with WED Movement Team 2 who explored eating and nutrition in depth.

Food is a critical component of everyone's lives, and our tastes and behaviors begin as young children. A mobile unit focused on cooking and eating can help support parents as they build their children's good habits around healthy nutrition. The end result of a unit focused on nutrition is early learners who understand the essence of responsibility and healthy eating habits that will stand them in good stead for their entire lives.

The Nutrition mobile unit would feature age-appropriate cooking implements, seasonal locally-sourced produce and other foods allowing children to prepare, share and clean up after healthy meals. From ovens (in the off-board provision) to mixing spoons, whisks, the mix of high and low-tech will provide opportunities for collaboration and socialization while practicing critical practical life skills

#### Child-Sized Food Preparation Resources<sup>14</sup>



<sup>14</sup> Montessori Services



Research done on the Japanese school lunch programs, demonstrates that when meals are part of education, not a break from it, children learn that what you put in your body makes a difference to how you think, feel and go about your daily life<sup>15</sup>. Additionally, teachers eat with their students demonstrating good table manners and talking about where food comes from and how it's prepared.

These programs are prioritized by the government; if parents can't pay the full cost of the meal, free and reduced-price lunch programs ensure that every child is provided for. The result of this program is that Japan has among the lowest childhood obesity rates globally. The program develops social skills, such as working together and sharing with others; as well as life skills such as shopping, meal preparation and cleaning, all of which are valuable<sup>16</sup>.

Examples of partnerships supporting Mobile Nutrition Vehicles are at work in Florida in the US.. Four libraries, 15 churches, and 20 recreational centers work with the school district to provide activities, while the bus supplies meals funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Serving food at community sites and activities has had a welcome side effect—youth participation in existing initiatives, like summer reading programs at local libraries, has increased.

In addition to using buses, the district has repurposed golf carts, outfitted with coolers and kitchen equipment, to ensure distribution equity.

## 5. BOOK MOBILES CONCEPT<sup>17</sup>

The most traditional use of mobile play and learning labs are **BookMobiles**. Active locally in the UAE<sup>18</sup> and globally since beginning as a horse-drawn wagon in 1905<sup>19</sup>, they provide access to library services in neighborhoods where the public library is either temporarily closed or doesn't exist.

In addition, they make stops at community events and local partner organizations. Whether on the move or at an event, Bookmobile service supports a library's mission to enhance access to knowledge and information and is proof that reading takes you places.

In locations where only a small percentage of young children score at or above proficiency in reading, or struggle to access educational resources, a bookmobile provides both school and library resources for families without reliable transportation or dedicated internet in the home.



*Roshan, the 12-year-old camel, gets ready to start his journey from the Zubeda Jalal Girls High School to remote villages in Balochistan to deliver books to underprivileged children in the Pakistani province on November 6, 2020. (Photo: Haneefa Abdul Samad)*

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.studyinternational.com/news/schools-japans-healthy-school-lunches/>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.treehugger.com/japans-amazing-school-lunch-program-about-more-just-eating-4857143>

<sup>17</sup> [BookMobiles | USA | You Tube link](#)

<sup>18</sup> [Newly designed KwB mobile library hits the UAE's streets | ZAWYA MENA Edition](#)

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.booklistreader.com/2018/03/29/bookends-childrens-literature/library-on-wheels-a-charming-history-of-the-bookmobile/#:~:text=Mary%20Lemist%20Titcomb%20is%20credited,in%20Maryland%20in%20April%201905.>



Camels have been known to substitute for vehicles in Pakistan; a novel and culturally sustainable model<sup>20</sup>.

Those with the greatest need for information and resources are often the individuals who have the most barriers to access it. Bookmobiles provide books and services directly to children and families - meeting their needs where they are. Services like this reach children with the necessary educational resources that can set them on a path for success<sup>21</sup>.

In addition to neighborhood visits, mobile libraries visit daycares, community centers, faith-based organizations, parks, block parties, and more—delivering not only books, but also library storytelling, sensory experiences, child-development testing services and innovative programming to under-resourced communities.



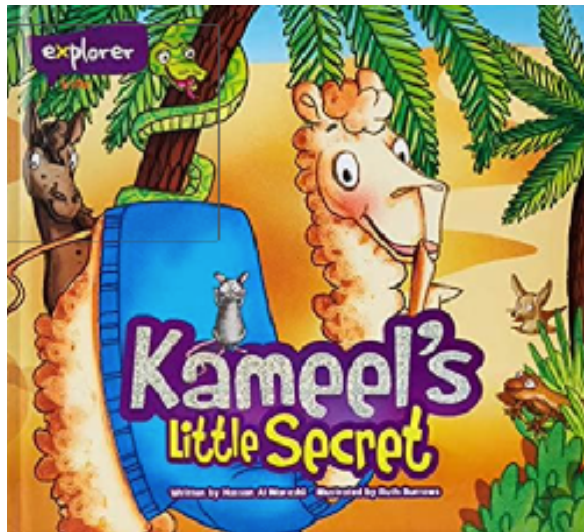
<sup>20</sup> [A mobile library with a difference — on a camel](#)

<sup>21</sup> [Mobile library visits 250 destinations across UAE | Education – Gulf News](#)

In addition to books and other print material, vehicles can be equipped with computers, iPads, phones, printers and free, accessible Wi-Fi, virtual reality experiences, providing much needed services to parents and caregivers as well as children, in regional areas such as Al Dhafra. All offerings will be monitored and overseen by suitably trained and experienced professionals.

For children of determination all mobile units and supporting devices and provisions, will necessarily be accessible<sup>22</sup>.

Showcasing *Emirati  
Children's Author's*



<sup>22</sup> Making Content Usable for People with Cognitive and Learning Disabilities





*Boys used to make toys from discarded bicycle wheels*

## 6. SPORTS AND EXERCISE

Research proves that movement and physical development aids better social interaction and supports wellbeing<sup>23</sup>

Physical activity enhances learning and enriches the lives of children by providing a safe and fun environment in which they build self-esteem, improve attentiveness, and develop their gross motor skills through social interaction and physical fitness using professionally developed lesson plans.

The mission of the *Sports and Exercise* unit will be to make fitness accessible and fun for every child; and model developmentally appropriate activities parents and caregivers can do with children at home. The equipment on the *Sports and Exercise* unit will be decidedly **low-tech**, encouraging active movement and participation. Equipment could include balance beams, small trampolines, monkey bars, climbing ropes, rock walls, incline ramps and tire swings. Play is non-competitive, designed for specific age groups, and reinforces cooperative skills and social interaction between players.

A visit always includes **professionally trained instructors and play therapists** who lead children through skills, drills, activity courses and games in the mobile gym. It could be soccer or karate-week, or mammals and amphibians week; whatever the theme, children get a chance to bounce, swing, climb and cheer their friends on. The visits end with a cool down activity and goodbye song, encouraging easy transitions.

## 7. COMMUNICATION & LANGUAGE

Communication is key to social interaction. One of the themes for the mobile unit will focus on communication and language.

*'Not every child is an extrovert'* was a comment from one of the youth's interviewed by the team. Certainly, tools can be handy to spark conversations and help children to build much-needed friendships. It's fine to have a helping hand.


### Developing Social Skills for Children of Determination

Topics:

1. Building Conversations
2. Friendship Skills Let's All Work Together
3. How to Make Friends - Lookin' Good
4. How to Make Friends - Connecting
5. Let's Play Together
6. Conversation Skills - Listening
7. Conversation skills - Getting Started
8. Hellos! Goodbyes!
9. I Can Learn from Losing

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.newswise.com/articles/more-exercise-fewer-screens-new-australian-guidelines-for-kids-in-oshc>

## Conversation Starters

<b>Situation:</b>	My child doesn't seem to know how to make friends. He doesn't know how to talk to other kids and only talks to them about the things he is interested in. How can I help him talk to others and make friends more easily?
<b>Summary:</b>	Try using conversation starters. This is a way to put your child at ease in social situations by planning and practicing conversations.
<b>Definition:</b>	Visual or auditory conversation starters with scripted questions and answers to use for practicing basic rules of social conversation. Many children have difficulty with the social skills needed to initiate and continue a reciprocal conversation with peers. This is a strategy to help children's conversations by preparing and practicing in a less stressful social environment.
<b>Quick Facts:</b>	Child's Age: 3-5, 6-10, 11-13, 14-17, 18+
<b>Planning Effort:</b>	Moderate
<b>Difficulty Level:</b>	Moderate
<b>Pre-requisites:</b>	None
<b>Process:</b>	<p>Find out what the other child's interests are. Find out if they share any interests with your child also. Help your child identify topics to talk about with the peer. (They could be popular topics such as current music, favorite games, movies, etc.)</p> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="background-color: #f08080; padding: 10px; margin-right: 10px;"> <p><i>Girls playing "almerihana" while chanting traditional songs</i></p> </div>  </div> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help develop a "script" with possible anticipated questions and answers that might come up in conversation.</li> <li>• Practice the conversational script with your child prompting as needed.</li> <li>• Role play alternating the roles.</li> <li>• Fade prompts as your child begins to feel more comfortable.</li> <li>• Start having your child initiate conversation in real life situations.</li> <li>• Develop a file of conversation starters to be reviewed and rehearsed as needed. (These can be put on small cards, list several topics and can be arranged by person, age group and gender.)<sup>24</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.thewatsoninstitute.org/watson-life-resources/situation/conversation-starters/>



## Emirati Stories, Songs, Books, Poems Traditional Games

1. Translating Emirati Folklore  
<https://dspace.aus.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/11073/8134/29.232-2015.13%20Shaikha%20H.%20Al%20Khamiri.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
2. Book about popular/traditional games in the UAE (in Arabic)  
<https://torath.gov.ae/details/الإمارات-في-الشعبية-الألعاب>
3. Images of traditional games with their names  
<https://ich.unesco.org/en/8-urgent-safeguarding-list-00407&include=slideshow.inc.php&id=00518#https://ich.unesco.org/img/photo/thumb/05860-LRG.jpg>



4. Emirati Traditional Games Exhibition  
<https://abudhabiculture.ae/en/events/emirati-traditional-games-exhibition>
5. Khaleej Times article - Fairytales and Folklore  
<https://www.khaleejtimes.com/nation/general/of-jinns-fairytales-and-folklore>

## Board Games

### NANNIES TRAINING DAYS

To encourage, enrich and empower human interactions around children and their helpers. Simple Interactions is a collaborative effort of teams across the United States.

The Simple Interactions Tool provides a common, descriptive language to talk about interactions in practice<sup>25</sup>. This could be a resource for planning training days and up-skilling nannies using developmentally appropriate practices.

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.simpleinteractions.org/>

## Activity Descriptions | Low Tech and Physical

### Facilitators:

1. Mobile Unit Leader - facilitates the program, develops the curriculum, maintains standards, focal point for full operations
2. Appointed government representative, a focal point for all government requirements e.g., licensing, funding
3. Early childhood educators (minimum of 3 years' experience working in the field in the UAE)
4. Early childhood educational assistant teachers (minimum of 3 years' experience working in the field in the UAE)
5. Designated pediatrician - oversees all content and operations
6. Designated child psychologist
7. Designated SEN Coordinator - overseeing the requirements of children of determination
8. Designated nurses - travels with the mobile units
9. Drivers and maintenance staff
10. Health and Safety Coordinator - ensuring Covid-compliant measures

### Space/Time Description

1. Mobile units will be set up within designated areas in urban and regional areas, subject to Abu Dhabi municipality licensing requirements and guidelines.
2. Covid-Complaint measures will be enforced under direction of the Ministry of Health and Prevention ('MOHAP').
3. Mobile units are not stand-alone vehicles. Eventually they will offer multiple services within the community. Therefore, additional space will be required, for example, for educators to model age-appropriate activities that will build social interaction skills. Additional offering will be developmental assessments and screening by expert health care workers. As such, the mobile units will be set up with either:
  - Temporary Ramadan-style tents (climate controlled)
  - Near a pop-up empty shop premises in a mall
  - Next to a purpose built 3-D printed learning environment that can be converted to a nursery or community WED space at a later date. This is an affordable and sustainable option.
4. As the concept evolves, mobile units will be themed - Social Interaction, Fathers Bootcamp, STEAM on Wheels, Nutrition Matters, for example. The interior will be adapted accordingly in a cost-effective manner.
5. It is expected that the unit(s) will be available monthly, with themed and times offerings
6. Online Registration for families
7. Activities and advice will nurture:
  - Social interaction - parent-child, nanny-child, family-member-child, child-child, educator-child
  - Language development

- Verbal and non-verbal communication - commenting, requesting, joining in, sharing, negotiating, gestures
  - Conversational skills - topics, turns, listening, empathy, greetings and farewells
  - Self-regulation
  - Emotional development
  - Imagination
  - Creativity
  - Self confidence
  - Self esteem
  - Fine and gross motor skills
  - Skills to transition from home to preschool/school
8. Outcomes - When children and families engage with the mobile units and access the services offered, various benefits and outcomes will include:
- Identity
    - Children will feel safe, secure and supported
    - Children will develop their emerging autonomy, inter-dependence, resilience and sense of agency
    - Children learn to interact in relation to others with care, empathy and respect
  - Community
    - Children will develop a sense of belonging to groups and communities
    - Children will develop an understanding of the reciprocal rights and responsibilities necessary for active civic participation
  - Wellbeing
    - Children become strong in their social, emotional and overall wellbeing
  - Communication
    - Children interact verbally and non-verbally with others for a range of purposes
  - Learning
    - Children and families will have easy-to-access sample resources for their own learning through connecting with people, place, technologies and natural and processed materials
    - Engagement in learning relationships
    - Experience the benefits and pleasures of shared learning exploration in a prepared environment





## Green Spaces, Outdoor Places for Purposeful Play

Outdoor play and learning spaces are integral to developing social interaction in children, particularly considering the element of play as a tool for such development. It is expected that the mobile unit will have access to such areas, weather permitting. There is potential for a strong partnership with the Abu Dhabi Department of Municipalities and Transport (DMT).

There is a unique opportunity for **constructing purpose-built playgrounds for children of determination**. ‘Playgrounds for All’; adaptive playgrounds -

An **inclusive playground is intentionally designed** so that children of all ages and abilities can play, be challenged, and have fun together. It goes beyond basic wheelchair accessibility and ensures that all kids have an inviting and enjoyable playground experience<sup>25</sup>.

More than 100 urban spaces have been revitalized by the Department of Municipalities and Transport. With the slogan *‘Open air awaits you in Abu Dhabi’*, the attractive pockets of new and improved urban spaces provide sanctuary from the hustle and bustle of the Emirate throughout the year.

Among the biggest regenerated spaces are the (E-25) Park and Sports Centre in Al Nahyan, entrance area of the International School of Choueifat, in Mohammed bin Khalifa Street, near Mushrif Park, Zayed University.

Situated between streets, parking and buildings, the spaces are **openly accessible to the public** and designed for everyday use. They feature a wider range of leisure facilities, as well as misting systems, ‘green walls’, lightweight concrete pavement slabs and native plants and trees, all of which help cool the area.

Some spaces also feature uniquely stylish canopies that are designed to improve the Universal Thermal Comfort Index (UTCI) from May to October, by maximizing shade from the morning and afternoon sun. The canopies also roll up at night to allow cooling of the area in the evenings.

Each space aims to improve **quality of life, health and wellbeing of communities** in surrounding areas, by providing more open and inclusive areas to explore, interact and relax, during different times of the day and for most parts of the year.

Latifa Al Hallami, Acting Director of Urban Growth, at Department of Municipalities and Transport, said: “At the DMT, we are redefining the use of urban spaces in Abu Dhabi, as multifunctional shared areas that build upon social integration, and stimulate a sense of belonging for **people of all ages**”.

“The **regeneration of urban spaces** its ongoing enhancements, supporting health, **wellbeing and biodiversity**, while contributing to a more comfortable, livable and sustainable Emirate.

“Each new feature of the revitalized urban spaces will have a symbiotic relationship with the surrounding area, ensuring they remain an integral part of infrastructure by delivering **high-quality urban spaces** for communities across Abu Dhabi.”

The public enhancement has included citywide public art projects, creative urban spaces and streets, active sports grounds, resting pods, colorful playgrounds and (climate cooling plazas).

There are an existing number of **green spaces in Abu Dhabi**.

1. The Department of Municipalities and Transport (DMT) inaugurated the **Crimean Walk** project in Jubail Island in Abu Dhabi, which is the first of its kind in the emirate, and aims to enhance the elements of eco-tourism, highlighting the importance of Crimean trees, and providing its visitors with an opportunity to explore the picturesque natural areas and coastal environment in the emirate.
2. In the Al Dhafra Region, DMT approved the **Mirfa Lodge Park and Campsite**, which is being built within the Marwah Marine Reserve, and has been listed for years as part of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) network for the Human and Biosphere Program. The 170-hectare project includes a variety of recreational facilities, including a sports field, swimming pool and camping areas<sup>26</sup>.
3. **Al Fay Park** project on Al Reem Island completed in January 2021 was launched by the Department of Municipalities and Transport. The 25,000sqm park features 2,000 local trees planted to create a forest-like environment and includes - world-class facilities for multiple sports and activities, and playgrounds for children.

دائرة البلديات والنقل  
DEPARTMENT OF MUNICIPALITIES  
AND TRANSPORT





To promote healthy living and continue to build on Abu Dhabi's status as a world-class place to live

**Khaled bin Mohamed bin Zayed**  
**opens Al Fay Park on Reem Island**

The first urban park focusing on bio-diversity in the emirate allows residents and visitors to play, relax and interact

**The 27,500 square metre park features:**

- 2,000 local flora landscaped to sustain a forest-like ecosystem
- world-class facilities for multiple sports and activities and children's playgrounds made of natural elements

High density of trees plus modern irrigation systems, therefore using 40% less water than traditional gardens

### Al Fay Park Abu Dhabi

<sup>26</sup> [https://www.dmt.gov.ae/Media-Centre/News/New\\_News\\_08\\_EN\\_AR](https://www.dmt.gov.ae/Media-Centre/News/New_News_08_EN_AR)

#### 4. Other parks and green community spaces in Abu Dhabi:

- 1) Delma Park (Abu Dhabi)
- 2) Sharea Park (Abu Dhabi)
- 3) Kathem Park (Abu Dhabi)
- 4) Wathba Park (Abu Dhabi)
- 5) Rabdan Park (Formerly known as Bin Al Jesreen Park) - Abu Dhabi
- 6) Shahama Park 1 (Abu Dhabi)
- 7) Al Mirfa Park (Al Dhafra)
- 8) Dalma Public Park (Al Dhafra)
- 9) Zayed Al Khair Park (Al Dhafra)
- 10) Umm Al Emarat Park (Abu Dhabi)
- 11) Mangrove National Park (Abu Dhabi)
- 12) Corniche beach and parks (Abu Dhabi)
- 13) Khalifa Park (Abu Dhabi)







## Functionality Descriptions

In addition to the experiences and examples listed above, mobile units have the potential to allow older students (6-8 years) a deep dive into science and technology.

When Science teacher Mark Barnett was in school, he did a hands-on project on wildflowers. It was the first time he had enjoyed school and saw the connection between doing and learning. As a teacher, he started a robotics club and then, using leftover equipment and a donated RV, created the Geekbus<sup>23</sup>, a 40-foot mobile learning lab equipped with tools like buildable Lego robots, wind turbine kits, and Arduinos—tiny programmable computers that can be used in building clocks, keypad locks, and robots.

To support students, he and colleagues developed curricula for six STEM subjects—robotics, 3D printing, renewable energy, video game design, hardware engineering, and computer software engineering—that could be taught onboard the bus as one-day workshops or week-long camps during school breaks.

Another example is the Bozone Ozone Bus<sup>24</sup> serving elementary school students in Bozeman Montana. What started as a high school student's idea to create a greenhouse for a retirement home, evolved into a mobile classroom that visits local elementary schools that want gardens but can't afford them.

It took two years, roughly \$25,000, and over 200 local partners to bring the bus to life. Seat frames were turned into plant tables, the roof was transformed to let in more light, and herbs and vegetables were planted throughout.

Local high school students designed science lessons - connected to the district's science curriculum—to teach elementary kids about photosynthesis and plant anatomy as they garden. In its first year running, they visited 2,000 students in every class in Bozeman's elementary schools, and to date, have served more than 10,000 kids.

## Illustrations



Mobile options



Children will play in any suitably adapted spaces



Books on Wheels



Sharjah Book Mobile



Play equipment on board a bus



IMAX Theatre in a bus





Abu Dhabi will do better than this!



Educational mobile spaces



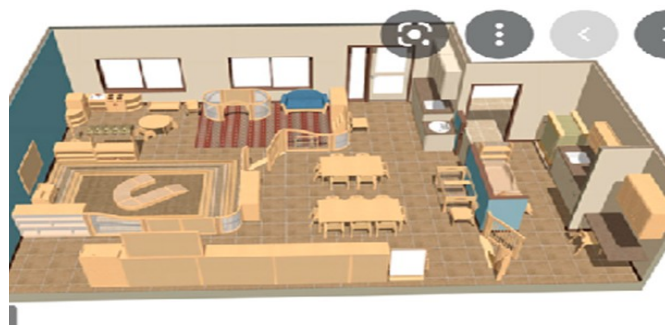
World's 1<sup>st</sup> 3-D printed school



3-D printed school



Ramadan-style tent can be adapted



Indoor Mobile units can be adapted using ergonomic child-sized furniture and resources



Close to Team 3b's concept



Extreme concepts



Refitted interior (sample only, not specific to the mobile unit)



Another idea

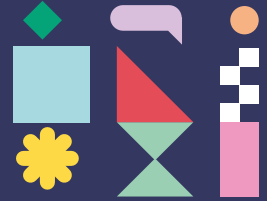


'Learning in our Neighborhood' (LION). A project where the ECE experts worked on the bus and drove it too! This proved expensive to run and maintain.



We know that gardens come in all shapes and sizes, but have you ever seen one growing on a bus?

# Case Studies



1. Aspen Community Development - **a preschool on wheels**<sup>27</sup>.
2. Measuring Quality of Privately-Owned Early Childhood Care and Education Centers in the United Arab Emirates: A Ras Al Khaimah Case Study<sup>28</sup>
3. Bridging the Education Divide Using Social Technologies: Explorations in rural India  
By Somprakash Bandyopadhyay |  
<https://www.amazon.com/s?k=9789813367388&i=stripbooks&linkCode=qs>
4. Professional Beth Hughes bringing play therapy bus to children in need |  
[https://www.bdtonline.com/news/professional-beth-hughes-bringing-play-therapy-bus-to-children-in-need/article\\_2bbe288e-e82f-11eb-8e08-230eb5759e6d.html](https://www.bdtonline.com/news/professional-beth-hughes-bringing-play-therapy-bus-to-children-in-need/article_2bbe288e-e82f-11eb-8e08-230eb5759e6d.html)
5. Finland's education system is renowned worldwide for its achievements both in absolute terms and in terms of homogeneity of performance in and between schools<sup>4</sup>. Espoo's education results are some of the best, in Finland. The city has been recognized as a UNESCO Learning City since 2013 and was given the Educating Cities Award of Living Together in Cities in 2016<sup>5</sup>. The Espoo city strategy for the years 2017-2021 sets out the objective for Espoo to have the best learning results in Finland and at the same time to prevent inequality between schools so that "every parent can trust that the local school provides quality education".<sup>29</sup>
6. In addition to considering a tent or pop-up store to accompanying the mobile unit(s), ECA could consider building learning environments using **3-D printed schools technique**<sup>30</sup>.



<sup>27</sup> <https://aspencommunityfoundation.org/preschool-on-wheels-announcement-2/>

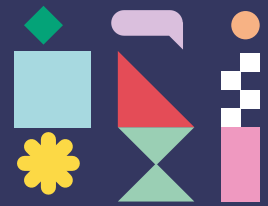
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<sup>29</sup> [https://coebank.org/media/documents/School\\_Design\\_and\\_Learning\\_Environments\\_in\\_the\\_City\\_of\\_Espoo\\_Finland.pdf](https://coebank.org/media/documents/School_Design_and_Learning_Environments_in_the_City_of_Espoo_Finland.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/exclusive-look-worlds-first-3-d-printed-school>



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## Output 2: Proposal for WED Alliance Children and Families



هيئة أبوظبي  
للطفولة المبكرة  
Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority

# WED Alliance for Children and Families



Prepared for: ECA

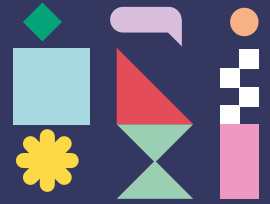
Prepared by: Team 3b | Social Interaction

September 2021

Proposal Number: 002



# SECTION 1



## Introduction

Childhood is under attack. Education systems have pushed academic expectations from primary education down to preprimary education. Parents keep children busy with early learning, heavily scheduled activities and multiple activities that leave children little time to play and engage with parents and play mates. Yet a growing body of evidence underscores the critical importance of foundational social-emotional skills, executive functioning and emotional well-being that prepares a child to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

To change the world for children and prepare them for the future, an opportunity exists for the creation of a collaborative funding alliance in Abu Dhabi, the Arabian Gulf States and, on a wider scale, globally. A collaborative fund could offer sustainable models of support for initiatives and innovations in family strengthening, nurturing relationships and early childhood care and education ('ECCE').

The mission of a WED financial alliance would be to fund projects, programs and services that would impact the social well-being of children and families at three geographical levels:

1. Local/national/federal initiatives, startups, and expansions of existing businesses and services
2. Innovative projects in neighboring Gulf States that demonstrate potential for global scaling
3. I-identified gaps in resources in countries with direct service links to the UAE, such as, south and central Asia, India, the Philippines, Kenya, Bangladesh, Nepal.

The proposed WED Alliance funding would prioritize families and their young children, ages 0-8 years, and the unique experiences which impact their development, the way they experience themselves, their social relationships, and their world.

Decades of child development research has confirmed that to be prepared for the future, children need opportunities to develop social interaction skills that civil societies value such as:

- Self-regulation
- Empathy
- Executive functioning (i.e., how to manage multiple "incoming messages- like air traffic controllers in a busy international airport like Abu Dhabi or Dubai)
- Perspective taking (i.e., "understanding "the other)
- Motivation
- Communication
- Decision-making

- Problem Solving
- Collaboration

The return on investment (ROI) in early childhood care and education (ECCE) has been thoroughly researched and is well established and quantifiable in countries all over the world<sup>1</sup>.

Funding and economic support for family strengthening/responsive nurturing and quality early childhood development, care and education correlates to less crime and less dependence on social services later in life, as well as successful employment and stable, long-term relationships.

Allocating resources to support the wellbeing and social interaction opportunities of young children is a proven economic development strategy that strengthens communities, countries, and society (Heckman)<sup>1</sup>.

And yet, limited funding opportunities exist in Abu Dhabi, as well as globally, that prioritize initiatives and innovations related to childcare, early education, family strengthening resources and social wellbeing for children aged 0-8 (Global Partnership for Education, “A Knowledge and Innovation (KIX) Discussion Paper” 2019).

The Abu Dhabi Department of Community Development Quality of Life survey (2019-2020) revealed a local need exists for economic support for working parents to improve their work-life balance, obtain quality childcare and take advantage of social and educational opportunities that enhance children and family’s overall wellbeing.

In order to develop a sustainable funding alliance, the WED Alliance Leadership could follow the guidance of international funding and technical support networks, including collaborative models that support children’s wellbeing, such as the *Global Fund for Children*<sup>31</sup> the *Global Partnership for Education*, social and education ministries, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and well-known worldwide development and philanthropic leaders such as the Gates Foundation.

Decades of research on the social wellbeing needs of children and families is available from organizations such as UNICEF, UNESCO, OECD, the World Bank, and the WHO. While these funding organizations support a broad range of initiatives around the world, few focus solely on the cultural and economic needs that impact the social well-being of children and families in the Gulf Region.

The results of WED Alliance-funded initiatives could be disseminated internationally and lead to capacity building, knowledge advancement, and evidence-based information for policy decision makers in the Gulf Region and around the world, regarding the current and future needs of young children.

By establishing and hosting a multi-geographic funding alliance to support the social wellbeing of children and families in Abu Dhabi, the World Early Childhood Development (WED) Movement has a unique opportunity to contribute financial resources and technical expertise to local, national, and global efforts that will change the world for young children.

<sup>31</sup> (<https://globalfundforchildren.org/>),

Please note that an example of a funded project/service/program would be funding a collaborative grant for the team's output – **'Adventures on Wheels'**, a proposed fleet of mobile units. Please refer to this proposal. Additionally, grants could fund the proposals of WED Movement Teams 1, 2 and 3a.

## Vision & Objectives

### Team 3b Vision

*Every child<sup>32</sup> in the UAE, between 0-8 years, will flourish when provided with opportunities to interact socially, within safe and secure environments that are based on nurturing and responsive care and education.*

### Objectives

1. The objective of the WED Alliance for Children and Families is to establish a multilevel, sustainable funding resource for children and families in Abu Dhabi that will support the social and wellbeing needs for children aged 0-8 in the UAE and beyond
2. The purpose is to provide economic and technical resources and support for young children and their families, specifically initiatives and innovations that provide family strengthening, responsive caregiving, nurturing, social interaction opportunities and high-quality early childhood care and education
3. The WED Alliance will consist of local, national, and international member organizations, including foundations and philanthropists who agree to combine funds and who share a common goal of supporting the social-emotional wellbeing of all children 0-8
4. A representative council of appointed members from organizations selected by the WED Leadership, with guidance from the Early Childhood Authority (ECA), will identify social, health, and educational needs and challenges for families and their children 0-8 and collaborate to fund initiatives that offer solutions to systemwide issues, locally, nationally, and internationally
5. The WED Alliance will serve as a mechanism to leverage significant combined and sustainable resources to fund initiatives that will contribute to a positive future for young children, and their families, which is a vital component of the knowledge and education priority for the UAE Vision 2030
6. The WED Alliance will inspire political commitment and increased investment, from public, private sector and foundations, designed to strengthen the best asset of every young child, her/his family. The Alliance will craft coordinated, consistent and evidenced-based messaging related to family strengthening, responsive caregiving, nurturing, social interaction, and social skills development opportunities for children 0-8.

<sup>32</sup> This is an inclusive term and necessarily includes children of determination.

## Context

1. The WED Alliance for Children and Families will provide technical expertise and financial resources to address the WED movement priorities, one of which targets social interaction as a critical component of children's wellbeing
2. The collaborative fund will finance programs and projects that offer consistent and evidenced-based messaging related to family strengthening, responsive caregiving, nurturing, social interaction and social skills development opportunities for children 0-8
3. Examples of systemwide issues and problems in Abu Dhabi, that have been identified by the WED Movement BWG Team 3A, that could be considered for funding and technical support, including:
  - Insufficient paid maternity/family leave, despite the current 90-day government policy
  - High cost of affordable, quality childcare and early education (ECA Strategy and Agenda, 2035)
  - Insufficient quality childcare and early education
  - Accessibility of safe neighborhood green spaces for young children and their families
  - Increasing parent concerns about the reliance on unqualified domestic workers for in-home childcare
  - Lack of cross-disciplinary communication between health, education and related business sectors
  - The need for curating and vetting of the overwhelming amount of information (i.e., social media) available to parents regarding child development, social interaction and best practices for young children 0-8
  - The Covid pandemic has created unique challenges and intensified pre-existing negative situations for children and families and the education community across the world. The WED Alliance for Children and Families can support initiatives to address these challenges in the UAE, as well as internationally<sup>33</sup>.

## Key Audience

1. All Children, aged 0-8 years (Emirati and expatriates, including children of determination)
2. Parents, mothers and fathers, extended family including grandparents, siblings and relatives for children 0-8 years
3. Caregivers /nannies for children 0-8 years
4. Early childhood educators, directors, managers, owners of nurseries, preschools and early childhood centers

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.nurseryworld.co.uk/news/article/new-research-reveals-the-financial-impact-of-covid-on-early-years-settings>

<https://voxeu.org/article/impact-covid-19-childcare-closures-and-women-s-labour-supply>

[https://docs.gatesfoundation.org/documents/evidence\\_review\\_of\\_the\\_global\\_childcare\\_crisis\\_and\\_the\\_road\\_ahead\\_for\\_covid-19\\_recovery\\_and\\_resilience\\_english.pdf](https://docs.gatesfoundation.org/documents/evidence_review_of_the_global_childcare_crisis_and_the_road_ahead_for_covid-19_recovery_and_resilience_english.pdf)

<https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/1109-childcare-in-a-global-crisis-the-impact-of-covid-19-on-work-and-family-life.html>

<https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2021/08/delta-child-care-shortage-unvaccinated-kids/619919/>



5. Schools, including educators for KG and primary grades, administrators, and special service providers
6. Health care providers, including pediatricians, family practices and hospitals
7. City planners, municipality departments, parks and recreation
8. Social and education researchers
9. Product developers for young children
10. Media and publications

## Implementation Resources

1. WED Leadership to collaborate with the ECA to review, repurpose and maximize existing ECA funds, technical expertise, and available resources to address children and family social well-being needs in rural and urban communities in Abu Dhabi.
2. WED Leadership to evaluate current government resources and funds allocated for families and children 0-8, public funds, local foundations, individual and private sector funding, and community-based organizations to determine coordination and collaboration potential and strategies for aligning financial and technical support.
3. WED Leadership to convene local representatives of UAE based foundations, community and private organizations and high-profile businesses, including health care providers, nurseries and schools, to gather information on implementation strategies and potential resources for the WED Alliance for Children and Families.
4. WED Leadership to select a local Funding Organization to serve as the host agency for the WED Alliance for Children and Families.
5. WED Alliance Host organization will conduct further review and submit invitations to potential alliance partners and resources, to include local, national, federal, gulf region and international ECD member organizations.
6. WED Alliance for Children and Family partners confirmed at three geographical levels: 1) local, national/federal 2) neighboring Gulf States and 3) relevant international countries and communities.

## Channels

1. Campaigns
2. Social Media
3. Digital Marketing
4. Pilot with data collected by ECA
5. Mosques and other religious venues
6. Website
7. Radio
8. Television



## Key Partners

The WED Alliance for Children and Families would consist of representatives from multiple federal, local and international partners that share common responsibilities for children and families. Partners may include:



Businesses who share a common vision for ECD (including support via CSR initiatives)

Local and Federal Organizations that provide Family Support:

- UAE Ministry of Community Development (MOCD)
- Department of Community Development (DCD)
- Abu Dhabi Judicial Department (ADJD)
- Abu Dhabi Social Support Authority
- Social Care & Minors Affairs Foundation (SCMAF)
- Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority (ECA)
- Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK)
- Abu Dhabi Family Development Foundation (FDF)
- Zayed Higher Development (ZHO)
- Abu Dhabi Department of Health (DOH)
- Local Embassies and Consulates

National and global funding organizations:

- Abu Dhabi Fund for Development
- Khalifa Fund for Enterprise Development
- Mubadala
- NYU Abu Dhabi Awards and Grants
- Arab National Bank
- Global Fund for Children
- Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
- UNICEF, UNESCO
- Capital Investment Fund Abu Dhabi
- The World Bank
- Hilton Foundation
- Save the Children International
- Bernard van Leer Foundation

Investors/philanthropists who recognize the potential for ROI

Community developers who support family friendly environments

## Impact

1. The social wellbeing of families and children aged 0-8 will be drastically improved in Abu Dhabi, nationally, and internationally.
2. Results of funded initiatives contribute to goals and objectives of the ECA Strategic Plan 2035 and the use Vision 2030.
3. Local leadership achieves global visibility and influence in agendas and policies related to the social wellbeing of families and children.
4. Alliance member organizations develop new or strengthened connections and share resources and knowledge that leads to deeper understandings through exchange of ideas and development of collaborative solutions.
5. Models of shared ownership of social interaction issues and child and family needs/challenges in the Arabian Gulf Region and beyond.
6. Alliance member organizations benefit from risk sharing in funding opportunities.
7. Local, national, and international professional networking lead to scale up opportunities.
8. Local and national recognition of donor organizations 'expertise and community engagement.
9. Stakeholders, grantees and recipients of funding benefit from flexible, reliable resources, including start up or seed money for disruptive innovations, peer mentoring and networking, knowledge and capacity building, advertising and marketing support, expertise of donor partners, impact on policymakers, and potential for replication, extension and expansion opportunities locally, nationally and internationally.
10. Alliance partners, stakeholders, grantees and recipients of funding resources and technical expertise improve organizational aspects, such as leadership, monitoring and evaluation that can strengthen them all as agents of change for the future of children.

### 1) Impact Statistics

One global investment leader that supports innovations in the UAE, and beyond, is Mubadala <https://www.mubadala.com>.

The Social Interaction Team recommends that the WED Alliance for Children and Families begin by reaching out to the Abu Dhabi office to coordinate efforts targeting young children and their families. This influential organization measures impact and progress by the amount of funds provided to numerous countries. Similar to the vision of the proposed WED Alliance, Mubadala reports on the outcomes of the organizations that receive their funding and measures the growth of local initiatives and innovations in terms of change and progress as defined by individual locations.

## Impact statistics used to showcase results of the Global Fund for Children ('GFC')

- GFC has invested \$46 million in more than 725 organizations, reaching over 11 million children and youth worldwide.
- On average, organizations' budgets triple during their GFC partnership, enabling them to expand and improve their programs for greater impact on children's lives.
- Our partners have received international recognition for their work defending and empowering young people, including 8 CNN Heroes Awards, 11 World's Children's Prizes, and 37 Ashoka Fellowships, among others.
- Our work has been featured in numerous media outlets, including Forbes<sup>34</sup>, Business Insider<sup>35</sup>, Gulf News<sup>36</sup>, Newsday<sup>37</sup>, BuzzFeed<sup>38</sup>, Yahoo Finance<sup>39</sup>!, The Telegraph India<sup>40</sup>, Devex, The Voice<sup>41</sup>, Diario Libre<sup>42</sup>, and AllAfrica<sup>43</sup>, as well as the Financial Times<sup>44</sup> 'Seasonal Appeal.

100+ community-based partner organizations<sup>45</sup> work in the areas of education, gender equity, youth empowerment, and freedom from violence and exploitation in more than 20 countries around the world.

In terms of **education impact**, the GFC partners with 48 local partners in 16 countries that work to secure **equal educational access and high-quality education for all children**. They provide education tailored to **girls' needs; early childhood development programs**; supplemental learning opportunities; and innovative educational programming for indigenous children, migrants, refugees, child laborers, and children with disabilities.

The COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund, Global Fund for Children is issuing immediate grants to local organizations serving children affected by the pandemic around the world.

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/bonniechiu/2019/03/27/girls-in-the-driving-seats-of-philanthropy/?sh=518b84032c84>

<sup>35</sup> <https://markets.businessinsider.com/news/stocks/more-than-100-grassroots-and-philanthropic-leaders-meet-at-us-mexico-border-to-support-migrant-children-s-rights-1028925153>

<sup>36</sup> <https://gulfnnews.com/uae/education/dubai-cares-launches-dh735m-programme-for-girls-1.2266029>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.newsday.com/lifestyle/family/books-every-parent-should-read-to-their-kids-before-kindergarten-1.12271931>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.buzzfeed.com/harperhendrickson/gifts-from-stores-that-give-back-to-good-causes>

<sup>39</sup> [https://consent.yahoo.com/v2/collectConsent?sessionId=4\\_cc-session\\_78d29b1a-a5fd-4a8e-bc1f-f69607578830](https://consent.yahoo.com/v2/collectConsent?sessionId=4_cc-session_78d29b1a-a5fd-4a8e-bc1f-f69607578830)

<sup>40</sup> <https://www.telegraphindia.com/west-bengal/calcutta/beware-of-traffickers-child-rights-panel/cid/1761541>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.voice-online.co.uk/news/uk-news/2020/08/05/million-pound-fund-aims-to-create-the-next-generation-of-bame-charity-sector-leaders/>

<sup>42</sup> <https://www.diariolibre.com/actualidad/fundacion-la-merced-realizo-caminata-contra-el-trabajo-infantil-GH13142477>

<sup>43</sup> <https://allafrica.com/stories/201806270118.html>

<sup>44</sup> [https://aboutus.ft.com/press\\_release/ft-seasonal-appeal-raises-4-89million-for-the-global-fund-for-children](https://aboutus.ft.com/press_release/ft-seasonal-appeal-raises-4-89million-for-the-global-fund-for-children)

<sup>45</sup> <https://globalfundforchildren.org/our-partners/where-we-work/>

As the pandemic took hold in 2020, GFC's partners pivoted to providing emergency hygiene kits, critical food supplies, and accurate public health information to children and families. More than a year later, they are stepping up to support young people affected by the economic fallout and unsafe situations caused by the pandemic, while searching for new ways to deliver key programming with limited resources. In India and other South Asian countries, GFC's partners are providing lifesaving support to children and their families amid a surge in coronavirus cases.

- 2) Additional Grantees (innovators, startups, inventors) could be awarded funding similar to the process used by Takamul <https://takamul.gov.ae/Site/index.html>, an organization that supports innovators, inventors and startups.
- 3) Numerous examples of metrics of change for the improvement of lives exist and can be adapted for cultural, economic, and geographic variances. **The WED Alliance for Children and Families** can review similar alliances around the world to develop specific criteria that are culturally relevant and responsive to the needs and challenges in Abu Dhabi, the UAE and the Gulf Region. The National Center on Parent, Family and Community Engagement offer 8 key indicators that can be measured in terms of change and impact on families.  
<https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/indicators-final-508.pdf>

The Center defines seven system components that can work together to promote family engagement in programs and early childhood systems: 1) Governance and Leadership 2) Policies, Regulations, Standards, and Licensing 3) Infrastructure and Funding 4) Continuous Learning and Quality Improvement 5) State and Community Partnerships 6) Consumer Education and Engagement 7) Workforce and Professional Development. These components are utilized to measure specific areas of change in children and families in the following areas:

1. Ensuring Providers 'Knowledge of Child and Family Development and Family Engagement Practices
2. Ensuring Providers 'Family-Specific Knowledge
3. Fostering Positive, Two-Way Communication
4. Creating Program Environments That Encourage Family Engagement
5. Providing Peer-to-Peer Activities and Other Social Networking Opportunities
6. Fostering Respect, Flexibility, and Openness to Change
7. Promoting Parents 'Sense of Competence
8. Advocating for Families and Making Connections to Supports and Resources

In terms of measuring children’s status, there are countless evidence-based metrics available for monitoring **children’s developmental progress from birth to age 5**.

1. **ECDI 2030 -Early Childhood Developmental Index** captures achievement of key developmental milestones 24-59 mo. This 20-question observational survey is completed by mothers and is designed to be entered into a country’s national data base for reporting to UNICEF, WHO and other international funding organizations<sup>46</sup>.
2. **EDI -Early Development Index** is a questionnaire for teachers of kindergarten children. The purpose is to observe children’s acquisition of milestones across five developmental domains, including social and emotional growth.
3. **ASQ-3-Ages and Stages Questionnaire** is a screening tool for parents, health care providers and early childhood educators to monitor children’s milestone development across key domains, including social and emotional growth. An online version is available, as well as the ASQ:SE-2 developed specifically for parents to monitor their children’s social and emotional growth. During one of the team’s interviews with a representative from ADEK, we were informed that for 2021/2022 ASQ will be used within preschools. <https://brookespublishing.com/product/asq-3/> | <https://brookespublishing.com/product/asqse-2/>
4. ESQ-Environmental Screening Questionnaire is a quick, parent-completed screening tool that gathers vital information about the home environments of children. <https://brookespublishing.com/product/esq/>
5. MEISR- Measure of Engagement, Independence and Social Relationships is an easy-to-use, parent-completed tool for developing a snapshot of the functional behaviors of young children. <https://brookespublishing.com/product/meisr/>
6. Piccolo – Parenting Interactions with Children: Checklist of Observations linked to Outcomes. A positive, practical, culturally sensitive, valid, and reliable tool to measure the quality of parent-child interactions. <https://brookespublishing.com/product/piccolo/>
7. SSBS and the HCSBS School Social Behavior Scales and the Home Community Social Behavior Scales. These Two K-12 rating scales that evaluate a child’s social-emotional strengths and risk behaviors at school, at home, and in the community. <https://brookespublishing.com/product/ssbs-2-hcsbs/>

<sup>46</sup> <https://nurturing-care.org/events/launch-of-2020-country-profiles-on-ecd/>

## Scientific-Based Evidence Backing the Output

By definition, ‘collaborative partnerships’ are:

*‘agreements and actions made by consenting organizations to share resources to accomplish a mutual goal’.*

Public-private partnerships are examples of common collaborations.

Alliances can be defined as a special or important collaboration in which all parties regard as strategically important to their individual aims or interests.

An alliance can comprise multiple collaborations, over a sustained period, which together constitute a strategically important relationship for all parties. (R. Thong (2015)<sup>47</sup>.

For alliances to be successful, all partners must recognize the value and benefits of their involvement and commitment.

They must yield benefits for the partners, but they are more than just a deal. They are living systems that evolve progressively in their possibilities. Beyond the immediate reasons they have for entering a relationship, the connection offers the parties an option on the future, opening new doors and unforeseen opportunities.

Alliances that all partners ultimately deem successful, involve collaboration (creating new value together) rather than mere exchange (getting something back for what you put in).

Partners value the skills each brings to the alliance<sup>48</sup>.

Specific evidence for creating and sustaining collaborative funding alliances can be found in the history and background of numerous well known funding organizations (see partner list). One global fund that appears closely related to the proposed WED Alliance for Children and Families is the Global Fund for Children<sup>49</sup>.

The history of the founding of this organization began in India in 1990 with one woman’s “moment of obligation” that led to a global grassroots network of partners around the world. Specific details on their current funding model, information and step by step processes for funding and awards on the website<sup>50</sup>.

Their vision for partnerships states:

“Partnering to build a world where all children and youth are safe, strong, and valued.”

Now based in the USA and the UK the Global Fund for Children finds and funds innovative startups and organizations in the early stages of development. They focus on funding initiatives that will use the funding to develop life-changing programs for children and youth. They offer flexible grants to maximize impact and they prioritize meeting needs that other funders may not be willing to support.

<sup>47</sup> <https://scitechstrategy.com/2015/02/01/how-does-an-alliance-differ-from-a-collaboration/>

<sup>48</sup> (Kanter, R. (1994) “Collaborative Advantage: The Art of Alliances”, Harvard Business Review)

<sup>49</sup> <https://globalfundforchildren.org/>.

<sup>50</sup> <https://globalfundforchildren.org/what-we-do/our-model/>

The Global Fund for Children also offers a *Theory of Change* framework that is designed to increase evidence-based practices and validate strategies for social change. This theory reflects an understanding of how change takes place and identifies elements that need to be in place to increase funding partner's effectiveness and sustainability. By understanding social change theory, an organization can better frame measurement effort and guide strategic choices across the organization. The Global Fund for Children offers compelling evidence for creating successful collaborative funding partnerships:

- “The most effective way of changing the lives of children and youth is to focus on developing holistic wellbeing through a human-rights-based-approach. [Funding] partners can significantly influence children, youth, families, and communities.
- Learning, innovation, and adaptation are intensified by collaborative work.
- Capacity development leads to improved performance. Local problems need local solutions.”
- Repository of knowledge around the critical importance of families in the healthy development of children

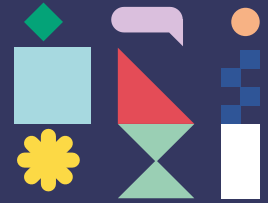
Another international partnership model is the Global Fund<sup>51</sup> which is designed to promote innovative solutions to global health challenges.

Specifically the funding collaborative is a model designed to accelerate the end of AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria as epidemics. This fund mobilizes and invests more than US\$4billion a year to support programs run by local experts in more than 100 countries. In partnership with governments, civil society, technical agencies, the private sector, and people affected by diseases, they are challenging barriers and embracing innovation. The Global Fund offers extensive publications, reports and resources detailing the fund activities and outcomes.

Additional local, national and international successful collaborative funding models are readily available (see potential partner lists) and many provide information and evidence on lessons learned and guidance for maximizing collaborative outputs.

<sup>51</sup> <https://www.theglobalfund.org/en/funding-model/>

## SECTION 2



### Implementable Program

1. The proposed WED Alliance for Children and Families is a long-term funding initiative that combines resources from local, national and international foundations and philanthropists who value and support the social well-being of children 0-8 and their families.
2. The multilevel 1) local/national, 2) Gulf Region and 3) international member organizations of the WED Alliance for Children and Families will work as collaborative partners to identify challenges and develop solutions to systemwide issues and combine resources to strategically target gaps and needs relevant to the social well-being of all children.
3. The WED Alliance for Children and Families is hosted by a selected organization that administrates the collaborative partners, funding operations and monitoring and evaluation of outcomes.
4. The WED Alliance serves as a mechanism to leverage significant resources and technical expertise, educate new and experienced donors, build knowledge and grantee capacity and advance programs, projects and services for children, aged 0-8, and their families in Abu Dhabi, the Gulf Region and beyond.

### Activities | Functionalities

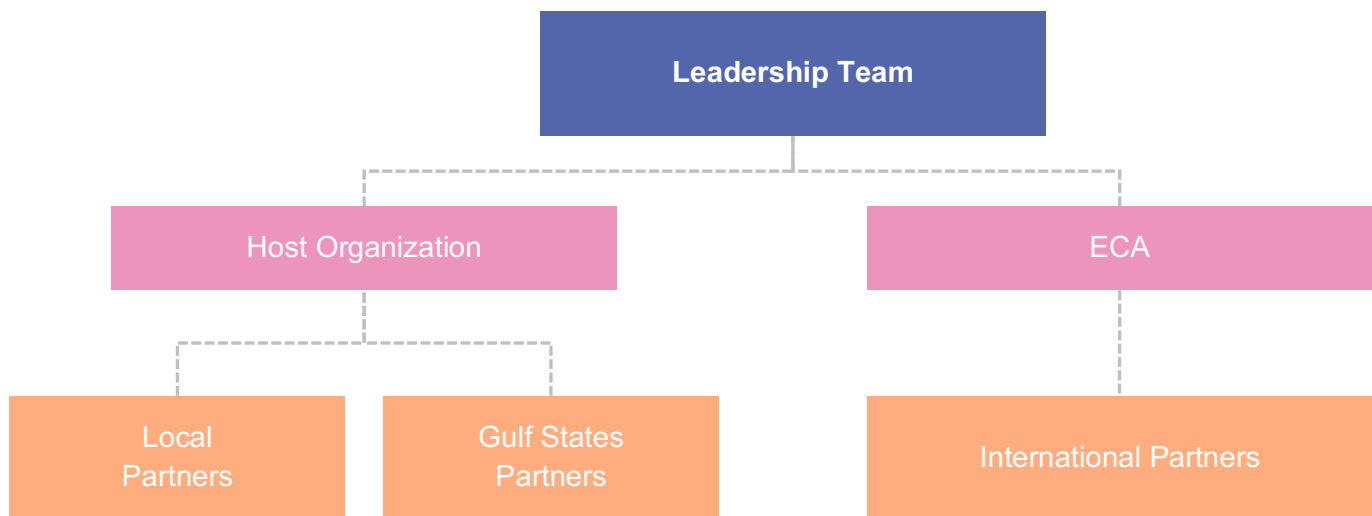
The activities to be completed in the implementation of the WED Alliance for Children and Families are based on typical funding organization and cycles models (see references in Section 1) and can be delineated into five phases, such as:

- ✓ PHASE 1: Internal planning (6 months)
- ✓ PHASE 2: Collaborative education and planning (6 months)
- ✓ PHASE 3: Grantee selection (6 months to 1 year)
- ✓ PHASE 4: Research, monitoring of outcomes and capacity building (1+ years)
- ✓ PHASE 5: Extensions, expansions and scale up planning (2-5+ years)



## Activity Descriptions

Appointed leadership with the expertise of the ECA, representatives will facilitate the first phase of internal planning. Ideally, these representatives will have experience and education relevant to early childhood care and education, social and emotional well-being, social change and family services, economics and funding strategies, including grants, awards, sponsorships, and researchers familiar with local, national, and international needs and gaps in resources for children aged 0-8 and their families.



During Phase 1, a host funding organization is selected by the WED Leadership. This organization will demonstrate the capacity to manage all operations associated with the WED Alliance for Children and Families, including activities in Phase 2, 3, 4, and 5.

## Theoretical Framework

See Section 1 Partner list of National and Global Funding Organizations

## Schedule for Implementation

### PHASE 1: Internal Planning (6 months)

1. Selected WED representatives explore local, national, philanthropic, and international early years funding sources and select a foundation or organization to serve as the host for the Alliance for Children and Families.
2. The selected host organization will partner with the ECA representatives to conduct local and Gulf States needs assessment and develop broad strategic goals for the collaborative process, fund management and grant making.

3. Host organization will work closely with ECA representatives to utilize needs assessment results to establish goals for the Alliance that encompass impact on the field, on grantees, on donors and the donor community, and on stakeholders.
4. The host organization and the ECA establish funding targets, administrative and relevant management costs, recruit administrative staff as needed for operations (3-4).
5. The host foundation determines fund parameters and requirements of partnerships.
6. The host foundation develops strategies to attract donors.
7. The host foundation reviews interested organizations and secures commitments from selected partners who agree to join the Alliance and provide sustainable collaborative funding streams.
8. The host foundation provides all donors with financial obligations, operations and monitoring policies and procedures, audits and safeguarding and distribution of funds processes.

## PHASE 2: Collaborative Education and Planning (6 months)

1. The host foundation conducts a series of meetings of donor partners for the purpose of collaborative goal setting, determination of objectives, review of needs assessment and to determine criteria for projects to fund.
2. Donor partners develop and plan the grant making process, draft proposal templates and award schedule, funding limits and monitoring and evaluation requirements.
3. The host organization develops Alliance website and marketing/advertising strategy for the Alliance, detailing Background of the WED Movement, Partners, Mission and Vision and Multilevel Funding Activities.

## PHASE 3: Grantee Selection (6 months- 1 year)

1. Businesses and employers who provide employee benefits such as extended family leave, flexible work schedules and locations, onsite or tuition options for childcare and education for 0-8.
2. Nurseries and childcare programs rated as “high quality” by local education entities, to use as staff incentives, professional development, sponsorship of mobile units, advertising/marketing/ scholarships for tuition, expansion and outreach activities.
3. Health care providers and nurseries coordination efforts to conduct regular developmental milestone screenings, to include communication with parents and guidelines for monitoring all children’s development and well-being.
4. Researchers and academic organizations in the form of Requests for Proposals (RFP) for research and development funding for short- and long-term research projects impacting the social wellbeing of families and children aged 0-8.
5. Examples of Gulf States and International awards/grantees may include initiatives and professional development programs for early childhood caregivers(nanny) training, development of parenting and family resources that support social well-being and collaborative short- and long-term research projects focused on social, cultural and economic challenges for children and families.

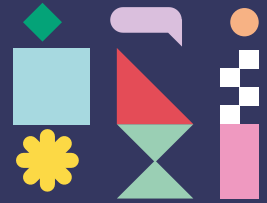
## **PHASE 4: Research, Monitoring of outcomes and capacity building (1+years)**

1. Data collection by grantees
2. Narrative and financial reports
3. Lessons learned and recommendations
4. Site visits by partners, satisfaction surveys
5. Dissemination of results at national and international conferences
6. Dissemination of results in peer-reviewed journals
7. Networking and peer- to- peer communication
8. Grant extensions, technical assistance, replication funding

## **PHASE 5: Extensions, expansions and scale up planning (2-5+years)**

1. Activities in Phase 5 will be dependent on the Alliance partners recommendations based on their review of the results of funded projects/programs/services. Additionally, the Alliance partners will revisit the goals and mission of the Alliance to determine local, national and international impact, and effectiveness. At this point, funding cycle decisions can be applied.

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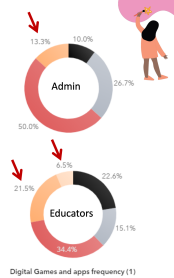
## Output 5: Report - Educators Survey

# ECD Educators Survey Data Insights

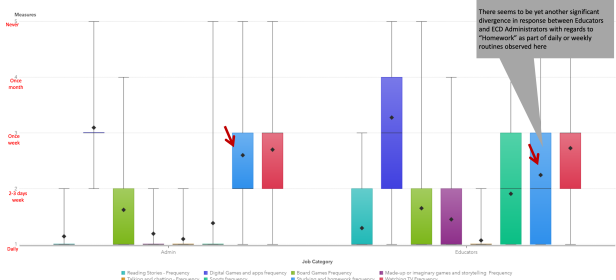
August 2021

### Insight 1

While 1 in 4 ECD Educators in Abu Dhabi surveyed (28%) believe **"Digital Games and Apps"** should be part of 0–8-year-old child's daily activity or should be part of their activity 2-3 times a week; only a much lesser 13% of ECD Administrators agreed with the same approach

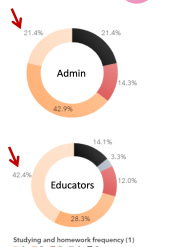


### Understanding the differences between Educators and Admin survey respondents on their beliefs on how often these activities should be a part of Children's lives?

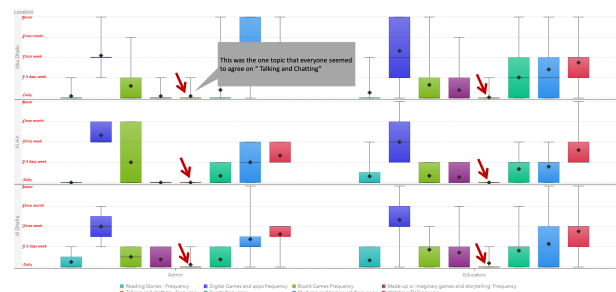


### Insight 2

Almost half of the Educators in Abu Dhabi surveyed (~42%) believe **"studying and homework"** should be part of 0–8-year-old child's daily activity; while only 21% of ECD Administrators agreed with the same approach.



### We further segmented the data of the responses by regions in Abu Dhabi and found some commonalities and divergence in responses





### Insight 3

Irrespective of the region, be it Abu Dhabi, Al Ain or Al Dhafra OR Be it an Educator or Administrator, the one topic everyone seemed to agree should be part of a child's daily activity is "Talking and Chatting"



### Insight 4

In Abu Dhabi (47.7%) and Al Ain (58%), a significant majority surveyed stated that children could watch TV daily or 2-3 times a week. Al Dhafra was the lowest with only 34% agreeing to the same.

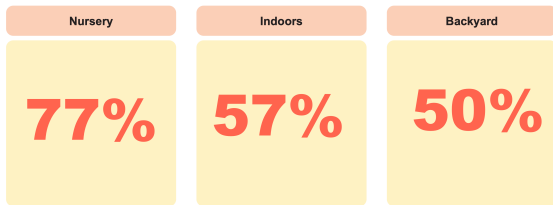
Once again, in Abu Dhabi (26%) and Al Ain (37%), a significant group of ECD educators believe that children should be allowed to use digital devices or apps daily or 2-3 times a week. In Al Dhafra only 16% agreed on the digital device and apps usage as part of daily or 2-3 times a week activity, indicating a significant divergence regionally.



### Top 3 avenues for Play

among backyard, Beach, Nursery, Playground, Indoors or Mall

### Insight 5



However, as we segment the survey data, we see some interesting insights and divergence in opinions based on region

### Insight 6

### Region wise segmentation

**Parks** While 47% of educators in Al Dhafra surveyed believe their young children go to community avenues like playgrounds and parks, to play- this is in contrast to a much relatively lower sentiment in Abu Dhabi (32%) and Al Ain (30%). This sentiment was more pronounced with educators in comparison to Administrators

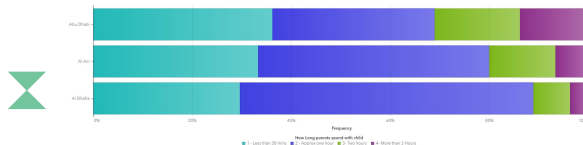
**Malls** Only 18% of educators surveyed from Al Dhafra believe their young children go to community avenues like Malls to play. While this was much higher in Abu Dhabi at 31% and Al Ain at 40%.



### Insight 7

### Region wise segmentation shows diverging time spent on play by parents

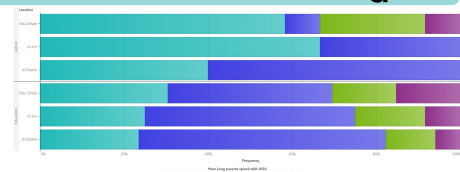
Majority of Educators surveyed in Al Ain (47%) and Al Dhafra (59%) believe that parents spend approximately one hour of play with their child. However Majority of Educators in Abu Dhabi 36% believe parents spend less than 30 minutes of play time with their child.



### Insight 8

### However different types of educators had divergent opinions

Majority of Administrators across Abu Dhabi, Al Ain and Al Dhafra believe parents spend less than 30 minutes with their children in play, while Majority of Educators across Abu Dhabi, Al Ain and Al Dhafra believe parents spend closer to one hour of play with their children



### Insight 9

### Spending time with peers

Across Abu Dhabi, Al Ain and Al Dhafra AND across Educators and Education Administrators, all of them believe Children should have opportunity to interact with peers several times a day.



## Output 6: Report - Stakeholder Voices



هبة أبوظبي للطفولة المبكرة  
Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority

# 2021

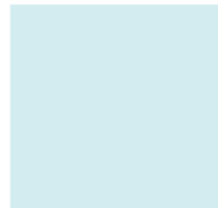
## Stakeholder Voices Report | Team 3b




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Social Interaction

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## Message from Team 3b



As part of the design concept, the team had the privilege of connecting with several stakeholders in Abu Dhabi (mainly), as well as Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Ras Al Khaimah and Fujairah, United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.).

Most of the stakeholders were eager to participate and dedicate their time to interviews via Zoom, MS Teams and telephone calls. Additionally, the team launched two formal surveys and one informal survey to listen to the voices of children, families, practitioners in education and leaders. Stakeholders also included experts.

This report aims not only to document the voices of the stakeholders, but also to take on board their concerns and challenges, recommending solutions in the form of online resources.

Stakeholder challenges are mapped to suitable and recommended, videos, websites, webinars, articles; curated, one-stop answers.

The team trusts that it will be beneficial to the many stakeholders in Abu Dhabi either parenting, caring for or educating children 0-8years. It is hoped that this will be a process that can evolve over time under ECA leadership

It is a start in shining the light on what is required to continue to nurture children, building and enhancing social development skills. Preparing them for the future.

## Stakeholders & Expert Stakeholders

It's often down to the 'why'. Why did the WED Team 3b opt to explore the world of stakeholders in the emirate of Abu Dhabi?

The answer - it constituted part of ECA's mandate - find out what the people in Abu Dhabi need when it comes to social interaction in children between the ages of 0-8 years. '0' being from the moment of conception.

The first set of stakeholders interviewed were chosen early in the design process.

Three categories emerged, namely:

- Fathers & Male Role Models (e.g., Imams)
- Mothers
- Creative Developers/Media

The process for finding stakeholders involved referrals from ECA, as well as contacting friends and colleagues of team members who either resided in the UAE or had done so previously. Two team members looked online for suitable stakeholders, which proved to be an effective way of locating participants. It was not always an easy task, but the team members who were involved persevered. It was pivotal to create any team outputs based on the problems and challenges specific to the Abu Dhabi population.

Geographically, the emirate of Abu Dhabi emirate is comprised of:

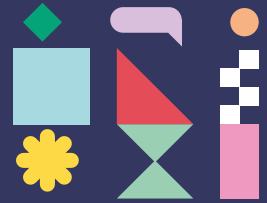
- Abu Dhabi (capital city of the United Arab Emirates)
- Al Ain
- Al Dhafra Region



The second phase of stakeholders included:

• School Teachers	• ADEK Representatives
• Nursery Teachers	• Maternity Nurse
• Specialist teachers and SENCOS for children of determination	• Pediatricians
• Nursery Directors	• Grandparent
• Nursery Owners	• University Dean
• Children and Youth	• UNICEF representative
• School Principals	• Representative of the Department of Community Development, Abu Dhabi
• Graduate Researcher	

# VOICES of ABU DHABI MOTHERS



- I simply do not have enough time to play with my children.
- I must leave my daughter in the care of an untrained nanny. I don't like it.



- I'd value community events to share best practices in early childhood development with my neighbors.
- Extended paid maternity leave would help me interact better with my child.

- Is social interaction that important?
- How do I interact socially with my children?
- I need alternatives to online games.

- Once maternity leave is over, my baby will only be 9 months. I don't want to leave him at home with a nanny.
- I have no family to care for my baby when I return to work.



- This is my 1<sup>st</sup> pregnancy. I don't have reliable and trusted resources to guide me.
- I'm not sure how to interact socially with my unborn baby.



*“Young children learn best in an interactive relational mode rather than through an education model that focuses on rote instruction”.*

## 5 Steps for Brain-Building Interaction Via ‘Serve & Return’

1	<b>Notice the serve and share the child’s focus and attention.</b>	An example of a ‘serve’ is a child: looking or pointing at something; making a sound or facial expression.
2	<b>Return the serve by supporting and encouraging.</b>	Sample ‘return’: You respond with gentle words; offer the child comfort with a hug; respond by saying ‘I see’
3	<b>Give it a name!</b>	When you ‘return’ a serve name what a child is seeing, doing, or feeling. For example - “Yes that is a beautiful flower”
4	<b>Take turns &amp; wait. Keep the interaction going back and forth.</b>	Every time you return and serve give the child the opportunity to respond. Taking turns can be a quick process. Waiting is essential and pivotal.
5	<b>Practice endings and beginnings.</b>	Children normally signal when they have completed a task and will indicate when they are ready to move on. They may say ‘All done’.



Availability of ECA resources and support for the early years

## Fathers Were Concerned About....



### Time for Play & Interaction

With the onset of the pandemic, some fathers were struck by the opportunity of having additional time with their children.

An Emirati father spoke of a time before the pandemic when he was away from his family for extended periods and the difficulty of parenting via video conferencing.

He stressed the importance of the role of the father and the need for constant connection with his children, being intentional and purposeful in the way he spent time with them.



### Safe Online Provision

It was clear that time spent by children online, was a concern. There was the dilemma noted by an Emirati father in terms of the 'old' ways and the 'new' ways. He said that it was vital to teach his children about their cultural heritage, which he did. However, there was also a need to prepare them for the future and current, rapid changes in the UAE.

Another father mentioned his concern about the lack of online safety for his daughters, even though they do have adequate supervision when it comes to screen time.



### Green Neighborhood Play Areas

A father living in a new area in the outskirts of the capital city of Abu Dhabi, understood about the importance of social interaction.

He stated that his children and grandson would benefit from community play areas and other initiatives to improve the opportunities for play and connecting with neighbors in the community. He said it would be useful if there were play areas, parks, libraries etc. within the vicinity of their home.





## Mothers Were Concerned About....



### Inadequate Maternity Leave

Several working Emirati and expat mothers expressed concern about the short period of maternity/family leave - 45 days.

This was linked to insufficient time with newborns, before going back to work. There are some private companies in Abu Dhabi who give up to six months leave, but this was not the norm. Two mothers stated that it would give them peace of mind if there were child-care facilities available at the workplace.

There was a heartfelt dilemma expressed about leaving newborns with unqualified nannies.



### Lack of Affordable & High-Quality Childcare

Mothers (working or not) found a lot of nurseries in Abu Dhabi were expensive and a good number of them did not provide a setting which emphasized the importance of social and emotional development. There was instead, more of an academic approach in preschools and schools.

It's fair to say that mothers received mixed messages about the significance, for example, of play, which is a tool for building social skills in young learners. Play-based learning for some was seen as essential, while for others it was regarded as a waste of time.



### Lack of Awareness of ECA resources

This point is imputed from one of the team's surveys which highlighted a surprising statistic.

Responses received from families in the emirate of Abu Dhabi revealed that 90% had not heard about the great work and available curated resources of the Abu Dhabi Early Childhood Authority ('ECA').

The team suggests in it's final recommendations, that this can be remedied fairly easily and will be a definite support to families. There are additional challenges and solutions set out below in the mapping section.



## Early Childhood Educators Were Concerned About....



### Availability of curated resources and support for the early years

Educators and leaders seemed to be unanimous in terms of having reliable 'go-to' resources for teaching children about social and emotional development.

There was consensus on the need for clear guidance on play-based learning, even though some educators practiced this within their classrooms.

The lockdown and social distancing restrictions presented additional problems for social development, particularly with the transition to online learning. Teachers stated that provision was insufficient for children of determination.



### Not Enough Time for Play

In some preschools and schools, the time for play was a problem. The teachers interviewed during a focus group repeatedly mentioned the fact that the school timetable (an Abu Dhabi public school), was not setting aside time for children to play.

Staff stated that this was a difficult and a risk to the proper development of the children. It had been a problem before the pandemic. There was an over emphasis on and pressure to achieve higher standardized test scores, at the expense of play. However, this is a common feature, in many educational settings across the globe.



### Support for Children of Determination

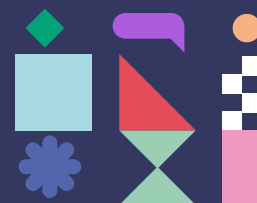
Specific, expert support for children of determination was required. This was highlighted during the lockdown.

A number of educators and trainers in the industry were concerned that there was a lack of overall awareness in terms of what children of determination (and their families) require in terms of support.

Additionally, sustained, expert care was inaccessible due to the cost, which was unaffordable for a good number of parents.



# MAPPING SOLUTIONS



## Mothers Voices and Solutions

1. "My son has a speech delay; therefore, I valued the benefit of sending him to a bi-lingual (Arabic & English) charter school in Abu Dhabi. The staff understood that developing strong social skills is part of language development. A holistic education is important, not just academic".
  - [Bright Start Foundation: Social & Emotional Development](#)
2. "As an expectant mum I am planning to communicate and interact with my baby in Arabic. This has been a stressful pregnancy and I find it difficult to connect with my baby as I am in a high stress job. I do talk to my baby sometimes, but I don't feel a connection. I try to involve my husband".
  - [ECA: Play & Storytelling](#)
  - [ECA: Tips from a Mompreneur](#)
3. "Lockdown and social distancing have affected social interaction a lot. It has been great to have educators on board who made the extra effort to connect with children like my son, who is at risk. He has asthma. Teachers made an extra effort to reach out to my son online".
  - [Bright Start: Parenting in a Pandemic](#)
  - [ECA: Preparing Children for the Digital World](#)
  - [ECA: Surviving during Remote Learning](#)
4. "I am the first my friends to become pregnant. I look for information online, joined a WhatsApp group and I read books for information. I have gestational diabetes and getting information from the public hospital to support me has been difficult. Private hospitals in Abu Dhabi are better than public."
  - [SEHA Parent Education Center](#)
  - [Al Dhafra Parent Education](#)
  - [Malaak Antenatal Services](#)
5. "During my first pregnancy, I struggled a lot with finding reliable and good information to support me, particularly in Arabic. An app or online platform was needed, customized for expectant mums, especially in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> trimesters. My mum is of a different generation and had different expectations, so I could not always rely on her to help".
  - [ECA resources](#)

Mothers Voices and Solutions

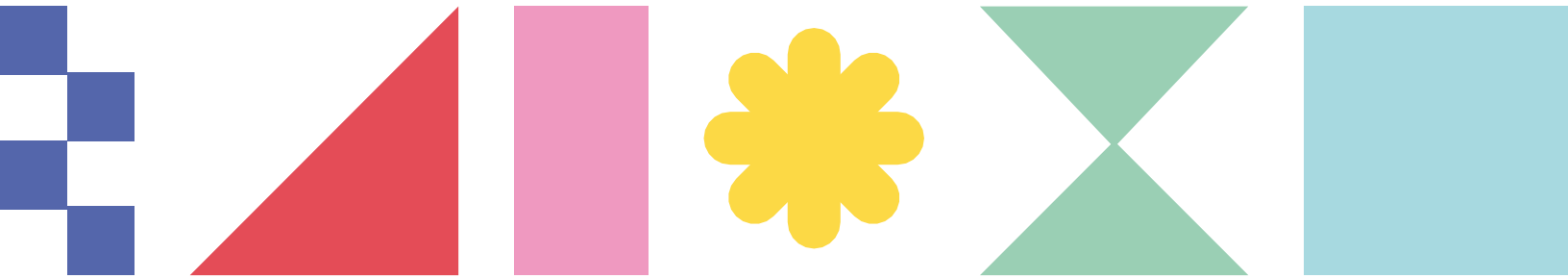
- |    |  |
|----|--|
| 6  | <p>"I can't rely on my mother or family to help with the baby when I return to work after only three months. If the company had a nursery this would be ideal. I will leave my baby in one room with the helper and a camera. I will train the helper and create a schedule. I do have 2 hours a day for nursing, but this time is not enough to care for my baby".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">ECA Breastfeeding &amp; Working</a></li> </ul>  |
| 7  | <p>"I had to quit my job during my first pregnancy as work was stressful and there was no support within the private sector, for expectant mums. My pregnancy was taken against me. Working from home would have helped. Now my experience makes me reluctant to have more children as there is no quality support".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">ECA: Super Mom or a Career</a></li> </ul>  |
| 8  | <p>"Social interaction in children is very important. I was a very introverted child. My son will not have peers in the family to play with as he is the first grandchild. I hope he will have interactive play times at nursery".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">ECA: Practical Ways to help your child make friends</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Bright Start: Six Ways to Raise Empathetic Children</a></li> </ul>  |
| 9  | <p>"When I first became pregnant, a consolidated list of hospitals did not exist in Abu Dhabi. There was insufficient information on how to communicate with my unborn baby and about communication after the birth".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">ECA: Parenting Resources-Pregnancy and Birth</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">ECA: Mindful Pre Natal Connection</a></li> </ul>  |
| 10 | <p>"I see that Covid restriction has already affected my 3-year-old nephew; he's shut down. It has had a negative impact on his social development".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Bright Start: Social and Emotional Development Research Background</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">ECA: Is Your Child Developmentally Delayed or a Late Bloomer</a></li> </ul>  |
| 11 | <p>"After I had my baby there was not enough time for me to spend with him as I had to return to work. I was very concerned about this as I had no reliable quality childcare. There are no agencies or entities for good quality experts to assist after birth".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">ECA: Life Changes After Baby Arrives</a></li> </ul>   |
| 12 | <p>"In my personal opinion I will not use technology with my baby from the get-go. In the first year there will be not TV, no phones, no apps etc. After one year it will be difficult to control if he visits his grandparents. Technology can be over stimulating".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">ECA: Everyday Screen Free Play the Easy Way with Can Do Child</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">ECA: Playing with Technology Using iPads Apps and Other Gadgets with my Children – Richard Hirstwood</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">ECA: No More Screens? Technology as an Inquiry-Based Tool for Play</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">ECA: Healthy Use of Technology Guidelines</a></li> </ul> |

Mothers Voices and Solutions	13	<p>“It would be helpful for developing children if more private companies had corporate childcare”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">The National: Abu Dhabi Employers Encouraged to be More Family Friendly</a></li> <li><a href="#">Khaleej Times: Abu Dhabi to Issue Special Labels to Parent-Friendly Offices</a></li> </ul>
	14	<p>“There should be adequate provision for children of determination. I have twin boys who are autistic and when they go to the playground the other children reject them. Sometimes the nannies have told me not to bring them to play. There should be inclusion in the UAE in public spaces and more awareness about children of determination.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Including Children With a Disability</a></li> </ul>
	15	<p>“In my community just out of Abu Dhabi there are no areas for the children to meet and play. This would help to develop interaction”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Abu Dhabi Parks</a></li> </ul>
	16	<p>“My daughter is seven going on eighteen. I home school my daughter because I became frustrated with the overly academic curriculum in the school, without taking into consideration the full development of children”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">ECA Periods of Development in the Early Years</a></li> <li><a href="#">Montessori Curriculum</a></li> <li><a href="#">Oak Meadow Home School Curriculum</a></li> <li><a href="#">ECA: Right to Play</a></li> <li><a href="#">ECA: Supporting Executive Function</a></li> </ul>
	17	<p>“Social isolation has not helped my child who has a shy nature. However, I have noticed since I worked from home, the children have been able to communicate with me more and check up on me, asking if I have eaten etc.”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">OECD Start Strong VI</a></li> </ul>

Mothers Voices and Solutions	18	<p>“Knowing much more about early childhood development will be very helpful with parenting (for both parents)”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Bright Start: Supporting Your Child’s Social-Emotional Development: Understanding Your Child’s Behavior</a></li> <li><a href="#">Bright Start: Supporting Your Child’s Social-Emotional Development: Parenting is a Journey</a></li> <li><a href="#">Bright Start: Fostering Healthy Social and Emotional Development in Young Children</a></li> </ul>
	19	<p>“It would be so much better if I had a qualified nanny. I do not feel comfortable leaving my baby with my nanny.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Simple Interactions Website:</a></li> <li>To encourage, enrich and empower human interactions around children and their helpers. Simple Interactions is a collaborative effort of teams across the United States.</li> <li>The Simple Interactions Tool provides a common, descriptive language to talk about interactions in practice.</li> </ul>

Fathers Voices and Solutions	1.	<p>“Not enough children’s activities in new areas. No neighborhood playgrounds. Not enough public libraries.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Google Search: Parks in Abu Dhabi</a></li> </ul>
	2	<p>“Online experiences should be safer for children.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">ECA: Child Online Protection Guide</a></li> <li><a href="#">ECA: Have You Prepared Your Children for the Digital World?</a></li> </ul>
	3	<p>“It is important to know how to build a better relationship over distance, particularly when fathers have to travel for work.”</p> <p><a href="#">Young Children Develop in an Environment of Relationships</a></p>
	4	<p>“Fathers should have more exposure and training about child development.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Bright Start: The FATHERHOOD Initiative in the UAE</a></li> <li><a href="#">ECA: Fathers and Babies Getting to Know Each Other</a></li> <li><a href="#">ECA: How to Involve the Father</a></li> </ul>
	5	<p>“Some younger fathers/mothers tend to give their parents their child to raise them. This should not be.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Australian research: Movement and physical development aids better social interaction and supports wellbeing</a></li> <li><a href="#">Initiative for community preschool in UAE</a></li> </ul>





*“Play and exercise demonstrably boost academic achievement.  
Most principals should know this. But they ignore it”*

- Professor Joshua Aronson



Voices from Children and Solutions

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 1. | <p>"It is difficult to play now during covid. It was better before when we could play."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">ECA: The Right to Play   Supporting Learning in the Early Years</a></li> </ul>   |
| 2  | <p>"I don't like bullies. I like my group of friends at school, we are all boys and play sports together."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">The Anti Bullying Parent's Guide</a></li> </ul>   |
| 3  | <p>"I find it difficult when I fight with my brother or sister, I don't like it".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">ECA: 8 Tips to Deal with Sibling Fights at Home</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">ECA: Sibling Feuds</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">ECA: Supporting Sibling and Peer Relationship During a Pandemic: Let's Play Together!</a></li> </ul>  |
| 4  | <p>"I like It when we do things as a family.<br/>I don't like it when my dad is too busy for me".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">ECA: How to Involve the Father</a></li> </ul>  |
| 5  | <p>"I don't like not playing with my friends, not having candy, and not having my brother sometimes he likes me sometimes he doesn't. I also don't like not going out to play in the playground".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be intentional about generating conversations in the home and setting aside time to model apt social interaction –</li> <li>• <a href="#">Watson Institute: Conversation Starters</a></li> </ul> |
| 6  | <p>"I don't like playing with my siblings because we always fight".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">The Well-Balanced Family: Reduce Screen Time and Increase Family Fun, Fitness and Connectedness</a></li> <li>• In a time where everyone from your spouse to your tween seems glued to their electronic device 24 / 7, it can be tough to spend quality time together.</li> </ul>                                   |
| 7  | <p>"Fighting with my brother and when my mum doesn't allow us to go to the groceries and when my toys break, makes me sad".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Playing to Learn in Finland Early Childhood Curricular and Operational Contexts</a></li> </ul>   |

Voices from Children and Solutions

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 1. | <p>"If teachers were equipped adequately to teach about social interaction, it would be more meaningful".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">OECD Starting Strong VI</a></li> </ul>   |
| 2  | <p>"In primary schools make it important for social interaction skills to be taught to all children (not every child is an extrovert)".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">ECA: Socialization</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Playful Learning Manifesto:</a></li> <li>• The Playful Learning Centre was established both to develop a research agenda within this new ecology and to act as a "living lab" to develop products and ideas all of which would contribute to a vision of playful learning. We want to bring scholars, teachers, innovators, and developers together with curriculum and policy.</li> </ul> |
| 3  | <p>"If Emirati children were taught a national sport at a young age it could lead to developing better social interaction skills".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Social Skills Through Traditional Sport</a></li> </ul>  |
| 4  | <p>"Within the Emirati community, it would be ideal if new mothers were encouraged to meet with one another, with their children, in a suitably prepared setting to interact, preserve their heritage, speak their language and share stories linked to their culture and beyond. There would also be opportunity for them to access professional childcare support".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adventures on Wheels - suggested output by Team 3b.</li> </ul>   |
| 5  | <p>"Smaller class sizes would make social interaction much easier in schools in Abu Dhabi".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Blog: With larger classes, teachers can't attend to children's needs</a></li> </ul>  |

Voices from Youth and Solutions

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 | <p>"We have observed in some settings that very young children are sitting at tables completing work sheets and have no opportunity to enquire, investigate and explore or interact with their peers".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">OECD: Quality Practitioners</a></li> </ul>   |
| 2 | <p>"The nursery wants to do an EYFS curriculum, but the mothers want the traditional way of teaching kids and have very little regard for social interaction".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Lego Foundation: Characteristics of Play</a></li> </ul>  |
| 3 | <p>"The Pandemic experience I have in social interaction has been tricky for me since I am handling the 3-to-4-year old's. It has not been easy for the children to adjust to the situation but i have tried my best to do the distancing and arranging each child's resources as per ADEK instruction".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Impact of Covid in the UAE</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">The Coronavirus Pandemic and Lessons Learned in Preschools in Norway, Sweden and the United States: OMEP Policy Forum</a></li> </ul> |
| 4 | <p>"When will children be able to interact with their friends? because of Corona, there are many boundaries between children and not giving them the freedom to play".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graham, A. (2011). Strengthening Young People's Social and Emotional Wellbeing. Centre for Children and Young People Background Briefing Series, no.7. Lismore: Centre for Children and Young People, Southern Cross University.</li> </ul>  |
| 5 | <p>"Social interactions were drastically reduced during lockdown and we had several children of determination who were having their sessions online, which was not very successful".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">ECA: Right Education for Children of Determination</a></li> </ul>  |
| 6 | <p>"Increasing the number of nurseries".</p> <p>"We face many challenges during this period, including that most children have been socially affected during the pandemic period, which has significantly affected their skills socially, linguistically, and psychologically, in which it increased the use of tablets by children".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Al Qasimi Foundation: The Impact of Covid-19 on Education in the UAE</a></li> </ul>   |
| 7 | <p>"Since the lockdown some children have difficulty interacting with others, sharing toys, and accepting others".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">ECA: Why My Toddler Doesn't Share</a></li> </ul>   |
| 8 | <p>"Therefore, we're developing children's skills and promoting the social aspect, as most children lacked friends and group play during the pandemic, in addition to developing speech, concentration and developing their skills in general through education through play".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Social Development in Early Education</a></li> </ul>   |
| 9 | <p>"It is very necessary to make parents understand about the importance of purposeful play which is a tool of social interaction. It is not just about learning to read and write".</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Michael Rosen on Free and Structured Play</a></li> </ul>   |



value  
mothers  
well-being  
classroom  
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KEY environment infants  
social  
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place care stage  
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friend successful communication  
physical play work University met new  
teachers  
understand  
engagement students achieving good

Stakeholder | Educators & Researchers, Abu Dhabi



Voices from ECE Leaders | Directors | Principals | Nursery Owners and Solutions

1. “There is not enough designated time within the local school’s timetable for children to play”.
  - [Teacher’s Timing](#)
2. “High nursery fees are a problem in Abu Dhabi”.
  - [The National: How Families in the UAE Can Manage Childcare Costs](#)
3. “There is not enough quality training for staff that focuses on social interaction and other holistic elements of education”.
  - [OECD: Encouraging Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care](#)
4. “Staff in nurseries and schools have lack of awareness when it comes to trauma in childhood. This can affect social interaction”.
  - [Center on the Developing Child: How Early Childhood Experiences Affect Lifelong Health and Learning](#)
5. “Teachers had no understanding or training in terms of children’s social and emotional development; Teachers could not understand voiced concerns regarding child’s anxiety and reluctance to go to school”.
  - [Center on the Developing Child: How Early Childhood Experiences Affect Lifelong Health and Learning](#)
6. “It would be nice to have financial support from the government, particularly at this time of covid”.
  - [UAE’s Education Budget](#)
7. “Not enough unstructured play. A lot of nurseries in Abu Dhabi do not provide holistic development”.
  - [Virgin Radio: UAE Encourages ‘Right to Play’ on Emirati Children’s Day](#)
8. “There should be more nurseries with outdoor learning experiences in nature (weather permitting)”.
  - [Nursery World: EYFS Best Practice: All About... Outdoor Nurseries](#)
9. “Postpartum depression/guilt of parenting should be supported and dealt with. Maternity leave in Abu Dhabi should be longer”.
  - [ECA: How Can the Husband and Family Support Moms with “Postpartum Depression”?](#)
10. “The structure for setting up new nurseries could be easier and more affordable. This would encourage more nurseries to open. There aren’t enough nurseries in the regional areas”.
  - [ADEK: Nurseries](#)
11. “In Abu Dhabi there are not many suitably qualified staff in nurseries”.
  - [ECA: ECA Lunches Nursery Staff Training Program](#)



## *“I wish, I wish” (Stakeholder Voices)*

“

*Quality-driven affordable access to childcare*

“

*A full year’s maternity leave*

“

*Reliable information from hospitals to support me through pregnancy*

“

*Community play areas*

“

*Multi-generational support after birth*

“

*Land for purpose-built nurseries*

“

*Smaller class sizes to allow for better social interaction*

“

*Protection for my young children from the manipulation that online data and information brings*

“

*Online data & apps to support me as a mother-to be*

“

*Qualified housekeepers/nannies*

“

*To play more with my brother and cousins and to have more candy*

“

*Teach us soft skills to build confidence from age 8*

“

*Relevant Professional development for educators*

“

*Nature-based play spaces ; using the mangroves and the beaches*

“

*Training and awareness for parents to understand the importance of learning through play vs rote learning*



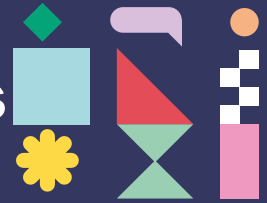
Healthcare Voices	1.	<p>“Proper developmental assessment is seldom conducted although its Bread-and-Butter for pediatricians. This is simply due to lack of time and lack of incentives to do so. Pediatricians nowadays are pushed to see more patients in less time to generate more revenue”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">CDC: Developmental Monitoring and Screening</a></li> </ul>
	2.	<p>“Unfortunately, there is no coordination between the effort of pediatricians and the education system”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A “Multitude” of Solitude: A Closer Look at Social Withdrawal and Nonsocial Play in Early Childhood - Coplan - 2007 - Child Development Perspectives - Wiley Online Library   <a href="#">SRCD: A “Multitude” of Solitude: A Closer Look at Social Withdrawal and Nonsocial Play in Early Childhood</a></li> </ul>
	3.	<p>“Parents have limited knowledge on developmental milestones in general. Their source of information is typically friends and family”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">ECA: Handbook for Parents – Psychology</a></li> </ul>
	4.	<p>“As a pediatrician in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, I take the time to screen children developmentally. It’s my duty”.</p>

Early Childhood Education Trainers	1.	<p>“There is too much emphasis on rote learning and not enough focus on the holistic development of children, which incorporates social development and overall wellbeing of children”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">TED Talk: Peekaboo Can Change the World</a></li> </ul>
	2.	<p>“it would be helpful if there was a national model for teachers to follow when it comes to early childhood education. A road map for early educators”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">Anji Play China</a>.</li> <li>• An educational philosophy and approach created by Cheng Xueqin, in Anji County, China. Grounded in love, risk, joy, engagement, and reflection, Anji Play returns the right of True Play to every child.</li> </ul>
	3.	<p>“Some teachers do receive adequate training that covers social and emotional development and play-based learning; however, parents impose their own requirements. Many parents do not understand about purposeful play as the basis for learning”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defending the Early Years</li> <li>• <a href="#">Anji Play China</a></li> </ul>
	4.	<p>“It’s time to disturb the staid and boring teaching practices represented by rote learning and infuse early childhood development with the power of building social interaction skills in a bid to place holistic development firmly on the table”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">OECD: Encouraging Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care</a></li> </ul>



Quality Training Requirements	1.	<p>“There should be more programs to educate classroom assistants on the value of play-based learning for young children”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">PLAYGROUP IN A BOX – Learn To Play. Community Play Solutions</a></li> </ul>
	2.	<p>“Children should be taught to be socially verbal”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">The World Bank: Step by Step – Toolkit Promoting Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) in Children and Teens</a></li> </ul>
	3.	<p>“Educators should be taught strategies and interventions in inclusive environments”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">University of San Diego: 4 Proven Inclusive Education Strategies for Educators</a></li> </ul>
	4.	<p>“Teachers should know how to incorporate physical education for children so that they develop social interaction and development of social skills”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <a href="#">PE Blog: Teaching Social Skills in Physical Education</a></li> <li>• <a href="#">Personal and Social Development in Physical Education and Sports: A Review Study</a></li> </ul>

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